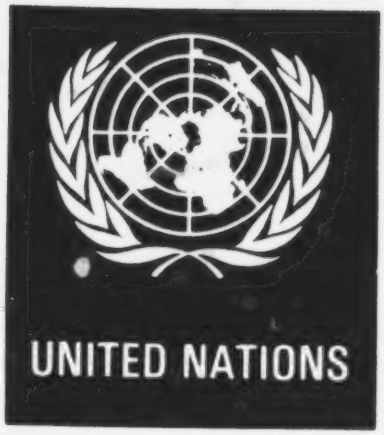

DIVISION FOR
PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

SPECIAL BULLETIN ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

1995

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I. COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

On 29 November 1995, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, as well as in several other cities, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

All States Members of the United Nations and specialized agencies and observers were invited to attend the solemn meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that took place on that day.

At that meeting, statements were made by: Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee; Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral (Portugal), President of the General Assembly; Mr. Chinmaya Charekhan, Special Political Adviser to the Secretary-General and Representative of the Secretary-General to the Multilateral Peace Talks on the Middle East, who read out the Secretary-General's message; and Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby (Oman), President of the Security Council for the month of November. The Permanent Observer of Palestine, Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, read out a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Also, Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva (Sri Lanka), made a statement in his capacity as Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arab of the Occupied Territories.

In addition, the representative of Colombia, Mr. Julio Londoño-Paredes, made a statement as representative of Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of Colombia and Chairman of the Eleventh Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. A further message was delivered by Mr. Ahmed Snoussi (Morocco) on behalf of Mr. Abdellatif Falali, Foreign Minister of Morocco and Chairman of the Twenty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers. Mr. Said Kamal, Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs of the League of Arab States, read out a message from Mr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States. A further statement was made by Mr. David Weaver, representative of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine.

Concluding statements were made by Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Chairman of the Committee.

Messages to commemorate the occasion were received from 23 heads of State, 9 heads of Government, 4 Governments, 10 Foreign Ministers, as well as the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity, the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Messages were also received from 9 non-governmental organizations.

In further commemoration of the International Day, the Committee arranged the screening of a series of films during the week beginning 29 November in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium. In addition, an art exhibit entitled "Generations" was presented by the Committee, in cooperation with the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, in the Public Lobby at United Nations Headquarters from 29 November to 5 December 1995.

At the United Nations Office at Geneva, a solemn meeting was held on 29 November. The meeting was chaired by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who opened the meeting with the reading of the statement of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The Permanent Representative of Malaysia at Geneva, Mr. Haron Siraj, spoke on behalf of the Committee

on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Mr. Ibra Déguène Ka, Representative of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, made a statement. The Permanent Observer of Palestine at Geneva, Mr. Nabil Ramlawi, also delivered a statement. Further statements were made by Mr. Talal Shubailat, representative of the League of Arab States; Mr. Nanguyalai Tarzi, representative of the Organization of the Islamic Conference; Ms. Maria Francisca Arias, representative of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries; Mr. Abderrahamane Bensid, representative of the Organization of African Unity; and Ms. Elaine Hesse Steel, representative of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. A number of messages were received from heads of State or Government.

At the United Nations Office at Vienna, a solemn meeting was also held on 29 November. On behalf of the Director-General, Mr. N. Jasentuliyana, Deputy to the Director-General, opened the meeting and delivered the message of the Secretary-General. Mr. Mohamed Fadhel Khalil (Tunisia) spoke on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Other speakers included: Mr. Alexander Christiani, Director of the Section for Middle East and African Affairs of the Austrian Foreign Ministry; Mr. Samir Youssef Hezzah, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States; Ms. Nasra Hassan, representative of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); and Mr. Faisal Aweidah, Permanent Observer of Palestine at Vienna. An exhibition as well as film screenings on Palestinian culture were conducted by UNRWA.

II. TEXTS OF STATEMENTS MADE AND MESSAGES DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE, 1995

COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Statement by Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

[Original: French]

Today the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is holding a solemn meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, President of the Security Council, Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan, Special Political Adviser to the Secretary-General and Representative to the Multilateral Peace Talks on the Middle East; His Excellency Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva, Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and His Excellency Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization, representative of Palestine. I should also like to welcome representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations and liberation movements, and representatives of non-governmental organizations, members of the press and all those who have accepted the Committee's invitation to participate in this solemn meeting.

I now invite everyone present to rise and observe a minute of silence in memory of all those who have given their lives for the cause of the Palestinian people and the return of peace in the region.

I should now like to make a statement on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

We have gathered here once again today, 29 November, to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. In 1977, the General Assembly, mindful of its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and the need to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, decided to observe this Day every year. Since then, the United Nations family of organizations has devoted itself fully to the task of supporting the Palestinian people in its endeavour. Meeting here again today, we are recommitting ourselves to the goal of attaining peace and justice in the Middle East.

Over the past few years in particular, it has been encouraging to note a number of promising breakthroughs in the Middle East peace process. These have led to the establishment of new realities on the ground, an improvement in the atmosphere of the negotiations and the gradual development of a sense of mutual confidence. At the end of the day, this could not but yield positive results. As representatives are all aware, after long and arduous negotiations, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed, on 28 September last in Washington, an important document, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which provides for an extension of responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority to parts of the West Bank and for elections in the near future.

The road to this further agreement towards implementation of the Declaration of Principles was hard, and the price that the parties had to pay for bringing their negotiations to fruition was high. Their progress was marred by acts of violence by forces opposed to peace, including the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

earlier this month. And yet the parties demonstrated their dedication to moving on steadily in pursuit of new areas of agreement, mutual reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People welcomed this new agreement, as it had welcomed earlier progress, and reiterated its full and unequivocal support for the ongoing peace process, particularly at the present crucial stage, and its hope that the process would continue to advance until a just and lasting settlement was achieved.

Peace and stability can hardly take hold where widespread misery, poverty and dispossession persist. For the Palestinian people, peace is not an abstract concept. In order to be credible, peace must lead to an improvement of their everyday life and to a better future for their children. For many years, the Committee has called upon the international community to support and assist the Palestinian people suffering from the hardships of occupation and living in extremely difficult circumstances. Today, the Palestinian Authority is making great efforts, assisted by the donor community and the United Nations, to establish an effective administration and to improve the quality of life. However, the legacy of 28 years of occupation and the destruction of much of the infrastructure requires a large-scale, long-term effort by the international community to tackle this problem.

Back in 1991, the Madrid Conference launched this effort by starting not only the bilateral peace process but also multilateral negotiations on Middle East regional issues. The conference created a much-needed framework for the promotion of region-wide economic cooperation and development. Much has been done to date by the donor community. Our Committee welcomed the convening at Casablanca in October 1994 of the Middle East-North Africa Economic Summit, and welcomed the most recent follow-up summit, held at Amman from 29 to 31 October 1995. The Committee was gratified to note that the participants at the Amman summit declared their intention to implement as soon as possible the understandings reached at the meeting.

For its part, the United Nations has continued to be a principal contributor to the programmes of rehabilitation and socio-economic development of the Palestinian society. As it has for many years, the Organization remained committed to and fully engaged in the various forms of assistance to the Palestinian people. In the course of the past year, the important work of establishing a United Nations coordination mechanism in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and of formulating an integrated United Nations approach to specific areas of assistance has been carried out by the office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. The Committee is grateful to the Secretary-General for devoting much time and effort to the pressing task of improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people and helping them to rehabilitate and develop their national economy and integrate it into a wider regional economic context. In its programme of work for 1995, the Committee gave priority to promoting international assistance to the Palestinian people in order to enable them to meet their socio-economic and development needs, and to supporting the Palestinian Authority in its institution-building efforts. It also structured its programme of regional meetings so as to address these issues in a more focused and practical manner.

Last year, the General Assembly, in its resolution 49/62 A, reaffirmed that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy. Our Committee, as the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, will continue to make every effort to promote the effective implementation of the agreements that have been reached between the parties. It will work towards the attainment of a solution of the question of Palestine based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as towards the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, in particular the right to self-determination. In this context, the Committee will continue to monitor developments on the ground and to alert the international community to human rights violations by the occupying forces and to the need to resolve outstanding issues such as the status of Jerusalem, settlements and refugees in accordance with established international principles and United Nations resolutions.

On this solemn occasion, I would like to state on behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People that, in keeping with the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, our Committee will continue to stand by the Palestinian people and to work untiringly towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the fiftieth session

May I first of all express to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the other members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People my appreciation for having been invited to take part in this important observance.

Recognizing the need to strengthen and consolidate international support for the Palestinian people, the General Assembly, by its resolution 32/40 B, requested the annual observance of 29 November, the anniversary of the adoption of resolution 181 (II), by which the Assembly partitioned Palestine, as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The designation of this special day reaffirmed the General Assembly's conviction that the attainment of political, economic and social justice by the Palestinian people was essential to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

As we meet on this occasion, we are pleased to note the progress that has been made in the peace process on the question of Palestine, despite delays and acts of violence that include the most tragic assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, whose life was stolen because he was deeply committed to the same peace process we commend today. We underline in particular the signing by the parties on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, providing for further withdrawals of Israeli forces, for the extension of responsibilities of the Palestinian Authority to parts of the West Bank, and for Palestinian elections.

We have been greatly encouraged by the fact that Israel has begun its withdrawal in a timely manner, that a number of prisoners have been released and that the elections are now scheduled to take place in late January. These developments augur well for a solution to this longstanding conflict. Both parties are therefore to be commended for their courageous progress towards a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and the establishment of peaceful relations between their peoples.

In welcoming this positive evolution, we urge the parties to continue to display the necessary political will and good faith to bring the peace process to full fruition. It would be tragic if a resurgence of violence were to jeopardize the peace process now under way.

The United Nations should continue to play a role in mobilizing the needed assistance in order to establish solid foundations for peace and in promoting the dialogue and confidence-building measures necessary to dissipate the hostility and mistrust that continue to alienate the peoples of the region. It should also continue to promote, in the interest of world peace and security, the peace process between all the parties to the conflict.

This Committee, under your dedicated leadership, Sir, has done much to focus the world's attention on the fundamental aspects of the question of Palestine. It must be particularly satisfying for you to see that progress has been made towards realizing the aspirations of the Palestinian people. Your task, however, is far from finished. A number of issues that are basic to the conflict and of great concern to many Member States remain to be negotiated, and the Palestinian people need the support and solidarity of the international community in enabling them to establish an effective administration. I know your Committee is keen to continue to make a concrete contribution to international endeavours in support of the peace process and I wish it success in its future activities.

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General,
delivered by Mr. Chinmaya Rajaninath Gharekhan, Special Political Adviser
to the Secretary-General and Representative of the Secretary-General
to the Multilateral Peace Talks on the Middle East

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People symbolizes the ongoing responsibility of the United Nations towards the Palestinian people and its commitment to the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I attach great importance to the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region and will continue to do my utmost towards this end.

In the past two years, historic developments have taken place in connection with the question of Palestine, following the signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

During the past year, while there have been setbacks, the Middle East peace process has continued and made progress. Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have demonstrated their commitment to the principles and provisions of the agreements signed by them and have shown their determination to proceed in the implementation of the agreements they have reached. They have also agreed that the immediate and long-term political differences between them should be resolved through negotiations and have persevered in their efforts towards this end. I am encouraged by the fact that the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have maintained their commitment to the peace process despite the tragic assassination of one of its main architects, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

I welcomed the signing on 28 September 1995 in Washington, D.C., of the Agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and applauded the leaders of Israel and the PLO and their negotiating teams, whose resolve and dedication to peace helped to reach this Agreement, which represents a further important step towards the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

I hope that this achievement will encourage progress in the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the Middle East peace process, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The security situation remains a cause of concern, a concern which has intensified in the aftermath of Prime Minister Rabin's death. Over the past year, I have on several occasions expressed outrage over acts of violence whose aim was to derail the peace process. Extremists on both sides must be stopped. The most effective way to curb their influence is to ensure that the negotiations continue and that tangible benefits deriving from the agreements thus far reached are apparent to all.

Of fundamental importance is the need to eradicate the economic instability and poor living conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, that could endanger support for the peace process. The resources of the United Nations family of organizations are contributing to economic and social development - a prerequisite for an effective transition towards Palestinian self-rule, which can help build the foundations for a lasting peace.

Since his appointment in June 1994, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Terje Larsen, has guided and supported the ongoing activities of the United Nations programmes and agencies. These include facilitating the development of public-works projects to create immediate employment opportunities and bring visible changes to the Gaza Strip; establishing a coordination mechanism on the ground to ensure effective disbursement of donor funds; and coordinating training and other assistance for the Palestinian police. The committed efforts of the international community are gradually beginning to bear fruit and a number of improvements in the situation have taken place, in particular with regard to institution-building and the development of infrastructure.

I renew once again the firm commitment of the United Nations in support of the peace process. The involvement of the Organization has so far been mainly in the field of economic and social development. The programmes and agencies of the United Nations system will continue to provide all possible expertise and assistance in these areas.

In conclusion, I should like to extend my thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under your leadership, Sir, for its contribution and efforts towards the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

SECURITY COUNCIL

Mr. Salim Bin Mohammed Al-Khussaiby, President of the Security Council for the month of November 1995

Allow me at the outset to express my pleasure in participating, in my capacity as President of the Security Council, in this special meeting marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me to join in this important observance, held annually to commemorate this Day.

The international community is committed to working hard towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. This event is also a reflection of the determination of our Organization to bring long-awaited peace to this region.

As President of the Security Council, I follow the events in the peace process with profound interest. There is no doubt that this year will be remembered as the year of major breakthroughs in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations set off by the 1991 Madrid Conference and the signing of the Declaration of Principles. We were encouraged by the fact that, in September last, in spite of numerous bilateral problems, the peace process advanced considerably and culminated in the signing at Washington, D.C., of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Regrettably, the road to peace has been hard and often tragic. Acts of extreme violence committed by those opposing the new realities in the region have claimed many lives. Most recently, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's Prime Minister, became another victim for having tried to achieve peace with his neighbours. These tragic setbacks notwithstanding, Israelis and Palestinians alike have demonstrated outstanding resilience, considerable political courage, wisdom and dedication to the letter and spirit of the Declaration of Principles, as well as an understanding of the urgent need to implement the agreements reached so far. We commend the Palestinian people and the Israelis for their efforts and determination. Our congratulations also go to those who have contributed to facilitating this difficult and unprecedented process.

As members of the Committee know, the Security Council's association with efforts to help the parties to achieve peace and stability in the Middle East goes back many years. In that regard, it is especially gratifying to remind ourselves that the present Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Today, the Palestinians and the Israelis are transiting through a very delicate and crucial stage in their relationship, fraught with many dangers. It is therefore of paramount importance that the international community continue to contribute constructively to the peace process and to assist the parties in accomplishing their mission. Guided by its responsibilities under the Charter, the Security Council will continue to support the efforts of the parties to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in the interest and for the benefit of all parties concerned, including the Palestinian people.

PALESTINE

Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, delivered by Mr. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations

[Original: Arabic]

I am pleased on this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People to extend to you, Sir, to all the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to all those who believe in the unity of Palestine, our most profound and sincere thanks for their efforts to restore to the Palestinian people the exercise of its inalienable and national rights, as endorsed by international resolutions and legality.

We extend our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his untiring efforts to enhance the strategic opportunities of our people and to support a comprehensive and just peace and the achievement of a historic reconciliation in the region based on mutual respect, recognition of rights and the achievement of self-determination and peaceful coexistence, which will put a decisive end to all wars, occupation, violence and terrorism.

I am also pleased on this occasion to extend my thanks and appreciation to all those who believe in the justice of my people's cause and who commemorate this Day, thereby expressing their support for our rights in solidarity with our people and for our just struggle, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly marking the annual observance of this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

This solidarity has supported and continues to support the struggle of our people and its continued progress, which has been crowned by the achievement of important national objectives on our path towards independence and the exercise of our national sovereignty in our homeland with the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with its capital at Al-Quds al-Sharif.

As all Committee members know, the Palestinian people has established its national Authority on a part of its national territory. The first stage was initiated with the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington, D.C., two years ago. We are now beginning a new phase: the implementation of the Interim Agreement on expanding the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. We are also restoring other Palestinian rights, thus completing the implementation of the Interim Agreement.

We must now move to the final status negotiations if the peace process is to achieve its full significance. This culmination would result in a great and historic reconciliation throughout the region. But such an achievement requires real progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, with a view to securing full Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab Palestinian territories in accordance with international resolutions and law. Only in this way can all the peoples of the region live in freedom, justice, equality, security and stability; only thus can we establish a new free, prosperous and stable Middle East as a pillar of international peace and security.

There must be continued and determined efforts to achieve a just political settlement of our cause if a modern nation is to be built and democratic Palestinian political rule established, thereby allowing for reconstruction and development following many years of bitter occupation.

At this crucial stage in the life of our peoples, in respect of both a comprehensive and just political solution and of nation-building, we look forward to continued solidarity. We are waging a war for reconstruction and development. This is our first experience of establishing democratic political rule and holding elections. These elections will indeed be the first of their kind in our country and they must be held as soon as possible. Here, solidarity is one of the pillars of our achievements and of the process of strengthening international peace.

Today, our region remains the focus of the attention of the world - a world that is hopeful that peace will be achieved and that an end will be put to hatred and suspicion. We are driven by the desire to strengthen peace and achieve our hopes and aspiration. Violence, terrorism and assassination, which we condemn, must therefore be eradicated. The peace process must be protected against anything that might jeopardize it, such as the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin of Israel or the decision of the United States Congress to transfer the American embassy to Jerusalem. That decision set a serious precedent that threatens to undermine the peace process, since it runs counter to the position of the current United States Administration, for which we are grateful, and of all previous Administrations. It also runs counter to the Declaration of Principles, which provides for negotiations on Jerusalem and other final-phase issues. In addition, it contravenes international law and resolutions prohibiting the annexation of Jerusalem on the basis that the city is part and parcel of the occupied Palestinian territories.

The power of international solidarity can be enormous if all countries and peoples unite in determination to achieve peace and justice. The widespread international solidarity with our people has profound importance and is deeply cherished by the Palestinians, whose struggle it enhances. To all our friends and brothers who are commemorating this Day, we extend our deepest and most sincere thanks and appreciation. We wish them every success in building and preserving the edifice of international peace.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Mr. Herman Leonard de Silva, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations and Chairman of the Special Committee

On behalf of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the occupied Territories, and on my own behalf, I have the honour to convey this message on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Washington, D.C., in 1993 and of the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organization Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area in Cairo in 1994 were historic landmarks of the peace process in the Middle East. Its second stage commenced with the signing of the Oslo II Agreement in Washington on 28 September 1995. Since then, significant progress has been made in the implementation of the peace agreements with the Israeli military withdrawal from the West Bank town of Jenin. However, in spite of these important positive developments, the peace process has been rendered more vulnerable by the tragic assassination on 4 November 1995 of one of its principal architects, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. It is imperative that, despite this sad and deplorable event, all parties involved maintain the momentum generated by these agreements in order to ensure the smooth continuation of the peace process.

Despite the positive developments mentioned, it is a matter for regret that the Government of Israel has continued to withhold its cooperation from the Special Committee. It has persistently denied the Special Committee access to the occupied territories covered by its mandate, a situation which has not changed since the Committee's creation in 1968. We hope that, in the light of the changed environment of peace, there will be a change of attitude in this regard. Not only will it be an earnest of good faith on the part of the Government of Israel, but the Special Committee will also be enabled to accomplish its task more efficiently and with greater assurance.

The signing of the Oslo and Cairo Agreements gave rise to very high expectations concerning the improvement of the human rights situation in the occupied territories. It was expected that these agreements would usher in a new era with the establishment of peace, justice, understanding and respect for human rights in the region. The Special Committee gave its anxious consideration to the question of whether the positive political developments to which reference has been made have led to a significant improvement in the human rights situation of Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories. The Committee has concluded that violations of human rights in the territories remain very serious and a matter of grave concern.

Among the principal factors contributing to the lack of improvement in the human rights situation are the repeated closures that were imposed on the occupied territories after serious incidents which affected security. The nature and effect of these closures are such that they amount to collective punishment. They have been described as an economic blockade and have caused a significant deterioration of the economic and social situation in the occupied territories, especially in the Gaza Strip. They have also led to a significant reduction in the number of Palestinians allowed to work in Israel. In addition, the restrictions imposed on the freedom of movement of the population of the occupied territories have had adverse consequences in the fields of health, education and the freedom of worship.

An important source of tension in the occupied territories has been the relentless expropriation of Arab-owned land for the expansion of settlements, the building of bypass roads and the appropriation of areas as quarries and natural reserves. The situation in regard to new settlements is particularly serious in East Jerusalem. The expansion of settlements around Jerusalem was said to be part of a policy aimed at altering the city's demographic composition by reducing the number of Arabs who live there. The Special Committee noted with concern the archaeological excavations in Jerusalem, which endanger the Al-Aqsa Mosque. In addition, the severe restrictions imposed on persons authorized to enter the city have seriously jeopardized freedom of worship for both Muslims and Christians.

Another significant source of tension among the population of the occupied territories has been the persistently violent behaviour of settlers, especially in the city of Hebron. Their conduct has become more aggressive and they have repeatedly attacked Palestinians, including the elderly and children, and vandalized their property, in most cases with complete impunity. Settlers have recently begun to clash violently with Israeli soldiers when staking claims to Palestinian-owned land by establishing encampments on hilltops in the vicinity of their settlements.

The number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention facilities continues to remain high. Their release has fallen behind schedule, which jeopardizes the smooth running of the peace process. Conditions of detention are reported to have deteriorated since the signing of the Oslo and Cairo Agreements. Of particular concern to the Special Committee are the "exceptional dispensations", which amount to licences to commit aggravated forms of torture, accorded to the General Security Service regarding the interrogation of persons suspected of having committed security offences. These harsh methods of interrogation even resulted in the death of a Palestinian detainee in April 1995.

The Special Committee welcomes the transfer in September of additional responsibilities to the Palestinians in the fields of statistics, fuel and gas, insurance, commerce and industry, labour and local government. It also welcomes the allocation of additional water resources to the inhabitants of the occupied territories. These constitute yet another step in the process of restitution of all the occupied territories and ought to bring about an improvement in the daily lives of their inhabitants.

The land and water resources of the Arab population ot the occupied Syrian Arab Golan have reportedly continued to be confiscated and its expression of nationalist sentiments has been prohibited and punished. The Special Committee nevertheless hopes that tangible progress will be made in the negotiations concerning the occupied Syrian Arab Golan.

The Special Committee is of the view that much greater effort has to be made if the human rights of all the inhabitants of the occupied territories and the region are to be more fully enjoyed in real terms. The political will is there, but unless the momentum of the peace process is maintained, there is the constant danger that not giving attention to the justified aspirations of the population of the occupied territories will bring with it the spectre of eroding support for the peace process, which can give way to frustration and despair. The progress in the peace process has to go hand in hand with full compliance with all relevant United Nations resolutions and the universally accepted standards of human rights. The Special Committee hopes that its findings will be taken into account when the concrete measures that need to be taken to that end are determined and that its work will be seen as a positive contribution to the peace process. All parties concerned must endeavour to build a truly meaningful culture of respect for human rights in the occupied territories so that the recent significant achievements may enable the people of the region to live in dignity, peace, security and mutual respect. This is the only way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region.

MOVEMENT OF NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES

Mr. Julio Londoño Paredes, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, representing Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of Colombia and Chairman of the Eleventh Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries

[Original: Spanish]

The commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an occasion of singular importance for the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. The cause of Palestine has been, is and will continue to be one of our primary goals and concerns. We are convinced that, until the serious difficulties and anguish of the Palestinians are resolved once and for all, it will be impossible to achieve the much-desired peace in the Middle East.

We greet with optimism the achievement of recent agreements between Palestine and Israel and it is our hope that the process will continue to move towards a just and permanent peace that takes duly into account the interests of the Palestinians and all parties to the process now taking place in the Middle East.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries will maintain its support and endorsement of the courageous efforts being made in spite of those who opt for threats and violence to prevent the achievement of peace, the establishment of an independent and sovereign State for Palestinians in their own national territory and a resolution of the problem of the refugees in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

The Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting during the third week of October in the Colombian city of Cartagena de Indias, in their deliberations paid special attention to the question of Palestine. Therefore, I would now like to read out portions of the Final Document of that Conference.

> "[The Heads of State and Government] reaffirmed their unflinching support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to secure their inalienable rights to self-determination and independence and reiterated their demand for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands including Jerusalem.
>
> "They pointed out that the responsibility of the United Nations in this matter should continue until the Palestinian people exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, until an independent and sovereign State is established within its national territory, and until the problem of refugees is settled in conformity with ... the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. They therefore insisted on the need for the General

Assembly to reaffirm, at its fiftieth regular session, its position on the major aspects of a definitive peace settlement, including the status of Jerusalem, the illegal settlements and refugees. They regretted the decision by Israel to confiscate Palestinian land and property in Jerusalem as well as its attempts to alter the religious and historic character of the Holy City. In this respect, they reaffirmed all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to Jerusalem and considered the Israeli actions contrary to these resolutions as null and void. They called for the full and scrupulous implementation of the Agreements, and in particular the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980). They underlined the need for the mechanism dealing with the issue of Palestine set up by the General Assembly to continue operating in an effective way. The Heads of State or Government expressed their support to the call made by the Jerusalem Committee, held in Ifrane, Morocco, 16-17 January 1995, to the United Nations Security Council, in particular the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to desist from carrying out any settlements and Judaization of the Holy City of Jerusalem and any geographic or demographic changes therein, and to comply with the agreements and conventions providing for the preservation of the Palestinian institutions and the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the Holy City of Jerusalem in implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

"They expressed that the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip of 20 September 1995 and the establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority constitutes a new step in efforts taken by Palestine and Israel.

"They considered that the arrangements relating to a Palestinian interim self-government should be widened quickly so that the Declaration of Principles is applied as rapidly as possible to the totality of occupied territories, with a view to giving effect to the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self--determination and to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"In this context, they welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip concluded in Taba, Egypt, and signed in Washington by President Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister as an important step towards the fulfillment of the national rights of the Palestinian people. They expressed the hope that further vigorous steps shall be taken for the complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 in order that comprehensive peace and common prosperity should prevail on the area." *(A/50/752-S/1995/1035, annex III, paras. 131-135)*

I should like to express our appreciation for the very important contribution made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the cause of the self-determination of Palestine.

We strongly support the Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Morocco in his capacity as Chairman of the Twenty-first Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, delivered by Mr. Ahmed Snoussi, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the United Nations

[Original: French]

Faithful to its laudable tradition, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is today commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People which this year coincides with the beginning of true détente in the history of the Middle East region.

On this occasion, it is a pleasure for me, as Chairman of the Twenty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), to convey to the Committee and its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, our congratulations and esteem for the efforts made to defend the rights of the fraternal Palestinian people with a view to enabling them to attain their freedom, national independence and territorial sovereignty and to disseminate the principles of law, justice and equity.

I should also like to convey my thanks and gratitude to all the staff of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat for their noble and untiring work to promote the law and to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. I should also like to take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to continue to afford the support necessary to the Palestinian National Authority to help it to overcome the difficulties it faces in laying the groundwork for an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, a State with modern foundations that will emerge within the framework of the new relationship resulting from the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the peace negotiations in the region.

As the Committee knows, the creation 25 years ago of OIC was made possible through the initiative of His Majesty King Hassan II when he convened the First Islamic Summit Conference in Morocco, following the arson attack on the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, which for us embodies the profound feelings of the Islamic nation as one of the greatest symbols of Islam and one of the most important monuments to a historic stage of Islam.

It should come as no surprise that the Islamic nation is committed to defending its holy places and that the question of Palestine is a top priority for OIC. As the most important cause of the Islamic nation, this priority is high on the list of objectives of the Charter of OIC and a permanent item on its agenda at sessions and meetings at the level of summit conferences and at other gatherings.

Member countries of the Organization have thus defended and continue to defend the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom and emancipation on the basis of international law and United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. They have spared no effort to safeguard the holy places of Islam and to protect them in cooperation with concerned international and regional organizations.

Today, as the question of Palestine is at a historic crossroads on the path towards a just and lasting peaceful settlement, we welcome these positive developments and will strive to work together to establish a peace that guarantees, on the one hand, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and the creation of an independent State with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital and, on the other, security for all parties concerned.

The advent of the peace we look forward to in the region requires the solidarity of the members of the international community to settle all differences, *inter alia*, the problem of the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif, compliance with the timetable for the transfer of powers to the Palestinian National Authority, progress in the Arab-Israeli peace negotiations and, more specifically, the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations.

The path of peace is an irreversible choice. However, it is threatened by the dangers of extremism, violence and terrorism. Furthermore, financial resources are needed to build the Palestinian economy and all economies in the Arab region because the establishment of peace is an essential factor in defusing a major hotbed of tension that has been a cause for concern to the entire world for almost half a century. In addition, the extension of this peace will provide stability and help to eliminate all forms of violence and extremism.

Because of the interest it has in these questions, the Seventh Islamic Summit Conference, which was chaired by His Majesty King Hassan II on 13, 14 and 15 of December 1994, expressed its support and endorsement of the Middle East peace process, which seeks to promote a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. It also welcomed the agreements concluded in this framework.

Therefore, today more than ever before, there is an urgent need for this honourable Committee to continue to be faithful to the lofty goals for which it was created: to support the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, which was the basis of the peace process in the region before and after the Madrid Conference as well as of the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington on 13 September 1993 and subsequent agreements.

It is therefore a positive sign that the attainment of these goals is mobilizing all peace-loving countries. This, I have no doubt, will usher in a new era, a prosperous future and a dignified and better life for the peoples of this region and the world.

LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

Mr. Ahmed Esmat Abdel Meguid, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, delivered by Mr. Said Kamal, Under-Secretary-General for Palestine Affairs of the League of Arab States

[Original: Arabic]

Allow me first and foremost, on behalf of the Secretariat of the League of Arab States and on my own behalf, to express to you, Mr.Chairman, our great appreciation for the role played by the Committee that you preside over and that your country has presided since its creation pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975. Through this role, the Committee has helped to draw the priority attention of the United Nations to the Palestinian cause and has assisted the Organization in defending the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to build a national entity on their own territory.

The world's conscience has been stung by this problem and international support has grown for the struggle of the Palestinian people. It is no longer possible to envisage a solution to the problem that does not take the aspirations and hopes of the Palestinian people into account.

This meeting today has special significance. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was established in 1977 by the General Assembly in its resolution 32/40 B. That resolution affirms, on behalf of the international community, that the struggle of the Palestinian people is just. A great injustice was recognized in 1981 by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/120 on Palestine in Israel's acquisition of a large part of the territories reserved for the Arab peoples and an even greater injustice was committed in Israel's occupation of all Palestinian territory following the 1967 war.

In spite of all these manifestations of injustice, the Palestinian people, as a result of their sacrifices and their triumphant spirit of innovation in their struggle, have emerged victorious in the new political situation and have proved that they deserve their freedom within an independent national entity. That entity is now a full-fledged partner in the current peace process, supported by all friendly brotherly countries and all peace-loving forces.

The celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People represents a realignment of the international community's objectives and in the way it has addressed the question of Palestine, which has long been discussed as a question of refugees to whom assistance was to be provided wherever they might be. Despite its disadvantages, a return to their land is the ideal framework within which to deal with this problem and to ensure a historical reconciliation between Palestinians and Israelis.

Before the Madrid Conference was held, the Council of the League of Arab States welcomed international and regional efforts to bring about a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Ever since that Conference, just and lasting peace has become a strategic option for the Arabs, affirmed by the Security Council in its resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), as have the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the principle of

"land for peace". The League of Arab States welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles on 13 December 1993 at Washington between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. Arab peoples and Governments subsequently welcomed the various stages and phases on the road to peace, all in an effort to restore the rights of the peoples of the region and to ensure security, stability and development throughout the region.

It is our hope that Israel will accelerate all aspects of this process and fulfil its commitments honestly and sincerely, so that the desired peace may reign and the peoples of the region can work for their development and stability. Through their culture, the Arab peoples are peace-loving by definition. Today, they are committed to peace within the framework of one of the most sensitive conflicts in their history: the Arab-Israeli conflict.

I am convinced that they would be even more inclined to work for peace if they did not feel slighted. How can the Arab peoples work for peace while their brothers in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Iraq are suffering under an embargo and from hunger? We hope that this extraordinary situation - "extraordinary" in the true sense of the word - will come to an end and that all Arab peoples can devote their efforts to the Palestinian people striving to build a better future. The right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is inalienable and cannot be negotiated. It has been reaffirmed in the Charter and resolutions of the United Nations. It has been exercised by peoples whose civilizations are no more vigorous than that of the Palestinian people. Peoples who have long fought for this right are understandably firm in their support today for the struggle of the Palestinian people.

The ongoing peace process requires the efforts of this Committee and its support for the Palestinian National Authority, which is gradually assuming its responsibilities in Palestinian territory. This Authority, however, is having to cope with harsh and complex economic and social realities following the occupation. The success of the entire peace process depends on that of Palestinian autonomy and on the Palestinian people's achieving their rights and their aim to live in freedom and independence. That is what we expect of this Committee and we hope that the international community will accordingly increase its support for the Palestinian people and address such pending issues as the question of refugees from settlements and Jerusalem.

In this connection, we call on this Committee to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. We hope that the Agency will pursue its work to achieve justice and that this Committee will urge Israel to end its settlement policy, which is an obstacle to the peace process. Here, we would urge the United States to put a halt to the settlements and to the activities of settlers who are hampering the peace process, even in Israel proper. The United States has a special responsibility. It can use loan guarantees to compel Israel to renounce this policy.

As for Jerusalem, its status is dear to the hearts of Christians and Muslims. Jerusalem is also an integral part of Palestinian occupied territory within the context of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). Israeli activities in Jerusalem are in conflict with the spirit of the peace process and at variance with American and Israeli assurances, contained in Shimon Peres' letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Norway, that the status of Jerusalem and the Palestinian institutions will not be altered. In this connection, I am grateful to the American Administration for the stand it has taken on the United States Congress' resolution to transfer the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. That resolution will increase extremism in the area and stands in the way of the peace process. The decision of the American Administration is based on its understanding that the status of Jerusalem will determine the success of the entire process.

The League of Arab States wishes once again to express its appreciation to this Committee, which is constantly striving to support the efforts of the Palestinian people in their just struggle. We are convinced that it will continue to work to that end and make it possible for the Palestinian people to recover all their legitimate national rights, in particular the right to self-determination.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

Mr. David Weaver, Director of the Middle East Office of the National Council of Churches, representing the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine

I am honoured to speak today on behalf of my colleagues, Mr. Donald Betz, President of the International Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, and on behalf of the movement of non-governmental organizations, which has stood in support of and solidarity with the Palestinian people for nearly five decades. On their behalf also, let me express thanks to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for extending me an invitation to address its meeting on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, one cannot but note how both the history of the non-governmental-organization movement and the history of the Palestinians are bound up with the United Nations and with each other. In accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, from its very foundation the United Nations has been an Organization not only of Governments but also of non-governmental organizations, which have been accorded a special place and the right of access to its deliberations. The founders of the United Nations recognized that the peoples of the nations of the world are not and cannot be represented solely by their Governments and that human society, in the breadth and complexity of its relationships - now fashionably called "civil society" - must be present in that institution which most represents the global community in its entirety. Even more significantly, the preamble of the Charter declares that the Charter itself comes from "the peoples of the United Nations" - I would repeat: "the peoples".

By that declaration, the United Nations recognized the reality and inspired the hope of all those millions whose aspirations for self-determination and freedom were yet and are yet to be fulfilled in independent statehood. It recognized its role as a forum and a recourse for all those whose emergence as nations were and are resisted and contested, whose voices often went and go unheard in national capitals, and who frequently suffered and still suffer injustice, occupation, repression, colonization, annexation or expulsion.

It has been the tragic fate of the Palestinian people that they have suffered and endured all the aforementioned evils as a consequence of the attempt of this very Organization to answer the horrors of European anti-Semitism and genocide with the affirmation of another people, through the partition of Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel as the State of the Jewish people. The triumph of the one has meant catastrophe for the other, whose bitter consequences have persisted through these many years and which only now may be approaching some measure of redress. The question of Palestine, the welfare of the Palestinians and the recognition and satisfaction of their demands for justice from the international community have been an inescapable responsibility of the United Nations ever since that fateful decision was taken 48 years ago. It has been a unique responsibility, as unique as the decision that brought it into being, and one that has shaped the life of the United Nations ever since.

In one form or another, the non-governmental organization movement has been part of that long and painful history every step of the way. As ad hoc groups of concerned individuals and as well-established charities, as churches and religious bodies and organizations, non-governmental organizations responded to the Palestinians in those early years with an outpouring of emergency assistance. Later, when it became apparent that the Palestinian diaspora was not a matter of days or weeks or months but of years, longer-term social and economic development projects appeared. From these early responses of compassion for human suffering came the knowledge of the experience of the Palestinians as a people, and from this knowledge emerged genuine solidarity and recognition of Palestinians' rights to self-determination, to independence and to sovereignty, to have a homeland and to return to it. This solidarity has been given explicit institutional form in the network of non-governmental organizations

on whose behalf I speak today, which have turned their chartered relationship with the United Nations into a partnership to affirm and uphold the national rights of the Palestinians in accordance with international law and universal principles of justice and freedom, as articulated repeatedly in United Nations resolutions.

The movement of non-governmental organizations has been a curious - if not cacophonous - mixture of principle and pragmatism in its support the Palestinians, both in it relationship to the United Nations and elsewhere. This is not surprising, since both the term "non-governmental organization" and the movement itself encompass an astonishing array of forms of human organization and points of view. The non-governmental organizations are united by four things: they are not Governments; their members usually are brought together freely by some shared belief or commitment or faith; they are undiplomatically uninhibited in their speech; and they care passionately about the Palestinians and their struggle. Many among them also care about those against whom the Palestinians have struggled, the Israelis, having foreseen long ago that, for good or for ill, the fates of the two peoples are now inseparably bound together and that the only hope for survival for both is mutual recognition, mutual respect and eventual reconciliation on the basis of a just peace - not a perfect justice, either, but a very imperfect justice, deeply unsatisfying to anyone who has lost and suffered so much, yet one that offers a better future than unremitting strife and violence. That even imperfect justice has its bitter enemies, in all camps, has been demonstrated by the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. His assassination has revealed in its aftermath, however, that the mutual recognition and process of negotiation represented by the Declaration of Principles, however flawed, have become nearly irreversible.

With regard to the present process of the agreements of Oslo, Cairo and other places, the movement of non-governmental organizations is divided, so I can offer no comment on behalf of all. There is cautious support, tacit acceptance and vocal opposition. What stands out clearly to us is the asymmetry of power and the continuing vulnerability of the Palestinians to domination and manipulation. This fact represents an enormous challenge to the Palestinian people and their leadership, to the United Nations and the international community and to the non-governmental organizations that are in solidarity with the Palestinians to ensure that the process, whatever paths it may take, does not stop until the Palestinians attain fully their national rights. All bets may be on the future, though the outcome depends not on chance, but on will and effort. Therefore, what can be affirmed is our continuing critical solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, our recognition and insistence that the United Nations has a unique role as the guarantor of their national rights within the international community and our unshakeable adherence to the fulfilment of those rights.

III. MESSAGES RECEIVED ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

A. Messages from heads of State or Government

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Burhan-ud-din Rabbani, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, on 29 November 1995, while expecting further successes of the peace process in the Middle East, I would like to convey to Your Excellency the sincere support of the Afghan nation to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to have their own independent State.

ALGERIA

Mr. Liamine Zeroual, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am happy to take this opportunity to reiterate the support of the Government and people of Algeria for your outstanding efforts to establish the claim of the Palestinian people to enjoy all their legitimate and inalienable rights.

Your role in this regard has been of great importance, embodying as it does the desire of the international community to shoulder its responsibilities, and reaffirming the continuing responsibility of the United Nations for the Palestinian people since the beginning of its ordeal.

In this context, Algeria is not slow to join its voice to the many voices issuing from the very hearts of the peace-loving peoples of the world to demand that the Palestinian people should be enabled to practice its right to self-determination. Similarly, Algeria will spare no effort to support the struggle of this steadfast people and restore to it all its legitimate rights, foremost of which is its right to establish its own independent State in the territory of Palestine.

My country has welcomed the latest, constructive developments in the Middle East, especially those that have taken place since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993, considering that those developments constitute positive progress towards the establishment of a comprehensive, lasting and just peace that will give the peoples of the region the right to live in tranquillity, with equal rights and responsibilities.

However, we are extremely disturbed by the serious delay in implementing many of the provisions agreed on, which raises doubts about the sincerity of the whole peace process. Of particular concern is Israel's procrastination with regard to withdrawal from the Palestinian territories covered by the self-government agreement, its studied disregard of the continuing settlement operations, the increase in encroachments by fanatical settler groups on the Arab population and the extension of the economic sanctions on that population.

Furthermore, the whole future of the peace remains tied to a resolution of the problem of Jerusalem that accords with United Nations resolutions, particularly the Security Council resolutions that rule that the city should be returned to its rightful owners, in order that Jerusalem may become Palestinian and Arab and open to all the revealed religions. Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic should also recover their occupied territories.

Lastly, on behalf of the Government and people of Algeria, and on my own behalf, I should like to reiterate my thanks and great appreciation for the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to wish it every success.

BANGLADESH

Mr. Abdur Rahman Biswas, President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People each year helps us in highlighting the problems faced by our Palestinian brothers in their struggle to achieve their rightful place in the community of nations. Bangladesh's position on the question of Palestine remains consistent and categorical. We welcome the peace accord and maintain that a solution of the question of Palestine should be on the basis of United Nations resolutions. We reiterate that the acquisition of territory by force imposes an obligation on the occupant to withdraw completely and immediately from all occupied territories including the holy city of Al-Quds al-Sharif.

On this day, the people of Bangladesh once again join me in reaffirming our support and total commitment to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, their right to national independence and sovereignty and their right to return to their homes and property.

Mrs. Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

On this day of solidarity with the people of Palestine, the Government and the people of Bangladesh join me in reaffirming our unwavering support and total commitment to the efforts leading to the realization of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine.

With the signing of the Palestinian Autonomy Accord, this day assumes special significance. We urge upon all concerned to ensure full and early implementation of the Accord with the ultimate goal of establishment of an independent and sovereign State of Palestine. In this connection, we also call upon the international community to extend all support and assistance to the Palestinian people at this crucial juncture.

Bangladesh hopes that the present peace process continues uninterrupted and the brotherly people of Palestine would find peace and prosperity in their homeland in the very near future.

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

Haji Hassanal Bolkiah,
Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam

On the occasion of the international Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Brunei Darussalam once again is pleased to join all members of the international community in reaffirming their support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle for self-determination.

Brunei Darussalam welcomes the significant progress that has been achieved through the Middle East peace process. We believe that there are strong indications that an enduring peace may result especially following the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, the establishment of Palestinian self-rule and, more recently, the withdrawal of Israeli security forces from Jenin. Brunei Darussalam hails the reaffirmation of the strong commitments made by Mr. Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine, and Mr. Shimon Peres, Prime Minister of Israel, to continue the peace process despite the tragic assassination of Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its endless efforts to bring about a peaceful settlement.

CHINA

Mr. Li Peng, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China

On the occasion of the convocation of the conference marking the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish to extend, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, our warm congratulations to the conference.

We are glad to note that in recent years the Middle East peace process has continuously made headway. Not long ago, Palestine and Israel, after hard negotiations, formally signed the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, another important step towards the complete restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and the realization of lasting peace and stability in the Middle East in a comprehensive and just manner. With relaxation of the situation in this region, the Middle East has gained a good momentum of regional economic cooperation. However, an equitable and comprehensive solution to the Middle East question, the Palestinian question in particular, still calls for continuous and arduous efforts in this regard. We firmly believe that as long as the Palestinian people make unremitting efforts in their cause and continue to win sympathy and support from the international community, the sacred objective of complete restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people will be finally achieved.

The Chinese Government and people have followed closely the developments in the Middle East and have all along sympathized with the Palestinian people in their historical experience, supported their just cause and the Middle East peace process. The settlement of the Middle East question not only conforms with the fundamental interests of peoples of all countries in the Middle East, including the Palestinian people, but also conduces to peace, stability and development of the Middle East and the world at large. China will, as always, continue to make its own efforts, together with the international community, for the final settlement of the Middle East question, including the Palestinian issue and the realization of peace and development in the Middle East in a comprehensive, fair and reasonable manner.

CYPRUS

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

On the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I wish, on behalf of the people of Cyprus, my Government and myself, to reaffirm our friendship to the Palestinian people and our support to their leadership.

We welcome the positive developments in the current peace efforts, culminating in the recent conclusion of the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The Cyprus Government follows with deep interest these developments and remains committed to contribute, in a practical way, to the enhancement of the peace process and the strengthening of the regional economic cooperation.

I note in this respect the programme of technical assistance to the Palestinian people, worked out by my Government in consultation with the Palestinian Authority. The implementation of this programme has already started.

We extend our heartfelt wishes that the current advances in the road to peace will continue unhindered and that the Palestinian people will soon benefit from the unparalleled opportunities generated by the improved political climate in the region.

ECUADOR

Mr. Sixto Duran Ballén, President of the Republic of Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]

I have the pleasure to convey to you my greetings on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to be celebrated on Wednesday, 29 November 1995. The Government of Ecuador, mindful of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, has taken particular pleasure in supporting it in the United Nations General Assembly and, on this day of celebration, expresses its wish that it may enjoy, without restriction, all the rights and freedoms to which it is entitled.

It is Ecuador's wish that all elements of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples may cooperate constructively in order to eliminate the obstacles that might endanger the courageous efforts of their leaders to achieve the ultimate goal of laying the foundations for a permanent peace in the region as a condition for friendly coexistence between sovereign, independent States.

I am also pleased to express my support for the work of the Committee, under your commendable supervision as Chairman, during the past year and to wish you every success in your future activities.

EGYPT

Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt

[Original: Arabic]

I am happy to extend to you and to all members of the Committee our thanks for your great effort to assist the Palestinian people in the achievement of its legitimate rights, as affirmed by numerous resolutions of the United Nations and its various organs.

I should also like to commend the positive and effective role you have assumed in gaining recognition for the cause of the Palestinian people and raising awareness of its legitimate rights among the international community and the peoples of the world.

This year, we commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in an atmosphere that reflects the progress that has been made in the peace process since the Declaration of Principles was signed by the Israelis and Palestinians in Washington on 13 September 1993. This outlined the main stages on the path towards the restoration to the Palestinian people of its legitimate rights, and held out the prospect that peace might prevail throughout the whole of the Middle East.

Today, after the signing of the most recent agreement between the two parties, as a result of which Israeli forces have withdrawn from Arab towns in the West Bank and the Palestinian people will enjoy its right to hold elections free from the oppression of occupation, the Palestinian Authority is being established so that the Palestinian people may control its own destiny. That is a significant first step towards the national independence for which every Palestinian has fought for so long, and it has been achieved by the sustained struggle of the Palestinian people, backed by Arab assistance and international support, and because the Palestinians freely chose peace and negotiation as the way to achieve legitimate national goals.

Egypt had the honour of being the first to explore the path to peace in the Middle East. Since it is a difficult path, full of problems and obstacles which have been accumulating over a long period, we in Egypt consider that

the Palestinian people is still in need of the support of the international community, more so now than ever before, as it takes its first steps along the path to peace in order to arrive at its goal.

The Palestinian people, at this important stage in its history, as it is in the process of recovering its legitimate national rights and preparing to exercise some of those rights in a part of its territory, is in the most urgent need of the efforts and perseverance of those who are sincere and love peace and assistance in every political, economic and other sphere. In Egypt, we have sworn to commit ourselves to continue to help the Palestinian people obtain its just demands and legitimate rights, thereby ensuring it an honourable independence on the economic and political map of the Middle Eastern region and concluding a peaceful, just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the area.

It is beyond question that the United Nations, as the representative of the whole international community, has special responsibility with regard to the issue of Palestine. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People represents the embodiment of one important aspect of that responsibility. Here, we should like to commend the progress made by the Committee in its work to harmonize with developments in the peace process and serve the needs of the Palestinian people during the current interim period.

On this occasion, we should like to call upon the Committee to continue its praiseworthy endeavours to ensure that the Palestinian people enjoys full freedom in its own national territory, including East Jerusalem, and that this part of the world becomes a region of tolerance, love and peace, where there is a place for all the morality and values of the three revealed religions by which this area has been distinguished. Let us therefore seize this historic opportunity for peace, and let us also close the ranks of the international community in order to guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people as a cornerstone of the success of the peace effort in the region. Without doubt, your Committee will continue to contribute to the realization of these lofty goals.

We reiterate our constant readiness to cooperate with you in this and wish you every success.

GRENADA

Mr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister and Minister for External Affairs of Grenada

On behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, I would like to take this opportunity to convey best wishes, peace, stability and economic prosperity to the Palestinian people who live in the Gaza Strip and Jericho and to the Palestinian people in general wherever they live.

INDIA

Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister of the Republic of India

The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People reaffirms the international community's commitment to, and support for, the realization of the legitimate goals and aspirations of the Palestinian people. The Day assumes special significance this year because of the forward movement in the Middle East peace process which has raised hopes of achieving these objectives in the near future.

India has consistently advocated a peaceful resolution of all disputes and, in this context, wholeheartedly welcomed the launching of the Middle East peace process and the agreements signed in the last two years between

Israel and its Arab neighbours. It is our hope that the Palestinian people, under the leadership of Chairman Arafat, who has ably guided their destiny through their most eventful and critical phases in contemporary times, will be able to realize their dream soon.

India, which has historical ties of friendship with the friendly people of Palestine, reaffirms its commitment to render all possible help - political, moral and material - to the Palestinian National Authority for the economic reconstruction and development of their region.

INDONESIA

Mr. Soeharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia

On the solemn occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government and people of Indonesia reiterate their unflinching support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their endeavours to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination, independence and sovereign statehood in their national homeland.

This commemoration takes place at a crucial phase in the efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Middle East conflict. Over the past two years the parties concerned have worked tirelessly to take full advantage of the window of opportunity presented by the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel. In this regard, Indonesia welcomes the signing, after months of arduous negotiations, of the agreement between the PLO and Israel on 28 September 1995, which provides for the extension of Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories, the phased withdrawal of Israeli forces and free, democratic elections for a Palestinian Council. Indonesia is therefore pleased to pay tribute to the peacemakers in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, Indonesia is acutely aware that the path to peace is still strewn with numerous obstacles and challenges. The continued transgressions by Israel of the letter and spirit of the peace accords have been a source of concern to Indonesia: Israel continues to maintain settlements on the occupied territory, particularly around Jerusalem, and to expropriate Palestinian-owned lands in the West Bank. These activities, compounded by such practices as the repeated closure of the occupied territory and delay in the release of the remaining Palestinian prisoners, not only pose grave security, social and economic repercussions, but may also endanger the entire peace process.

We should also like to emphasize the need for progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations as this is a prerequisite to the comprehensive settlement of the Middle East conflict.

Indonesia is equally cognizant of the enormous challenge of economic reconstruction that the Palestinian people have to contend with after decades of Israeli occupation. It is of paramount importance that measures be taken to redress the critical socio-economic conditions that the Palestinian people are languishing under. In this context, pledges of assistance to the Palestinian people should not be expeditiously fulfilled so that the rebuilding of vital infrastructures could begin in earnest.

At the same time, we are heartened by indications of the determination of the parties concerned to resolve the myriad issues surrounding the Middle East question in a mutually acceptable manner. We are also pleased to note that at this juncture, the role of the United Nations in the search for a solution to the question of the Middle East is duly recognized. In this connection, we should like to commend the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to promote international awareness and recognition of the cause of Palestine and its people.

It is most appropriate therefore that on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we pay homage to its central role in the struggles of various nations, including and especially the Palestinian people, for promoting the attainment of freedom, dignity and a rightful place in the community of nations.

Again, Indonesia emphasizes its support for the noble struggle of the Palestinian people and its confidence that they will emerge triumphant from that struggle.

JORDAN

King Hussein Bin Talal of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am pleased to convey to you and to the members of the Committee our sincere gratitude and appreciation for your sustained efforts to uphold the cause of the Palestinian people at the international level and to assist it to secure its inalienable rights, the foremost of which is the right to exercise self-determination in its own national territory.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has always supported the Palestinian people on every occasion and in every international forum and respected the decisions taken by its sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization. We decided to sever legal and administrative ties with the West Bank, in order to emphasize its Palestinian identity, and we provided the formula to enable our brother Palestinians to attend the Madrid conference in order to bring peace to the Middle East, in accordance with international law and Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Eventually, they were able to dispense with that formula, as is demonstrated by the Oslo and subsequent agreements that were also the subject of our wholehearted respect and support.

We in Jordan have concluded the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace, which has passed through all the constitutional procedures and which we hope will be one of the main supports for the peace process in this region. We still maintain our firm basic position of support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and the endeavours of its sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization, to arrive at peace agreements that will enable the Palestinian people to exercise its rights on the soil of its homeland and contribute to the establishment of the foundations of security, stability and a comprehensive, lasting and just peace in the region. Such agreements would also enable the people of the region to overcome the negative effects of the past decades of conflict, regenerate through comprehensive development and prepare for a better future and a secure and noble life for generations to come.

We reaffirm our commitment to continue to work for the long-sought peace in this region, and we look to the contribution of your Committee and the relevant United Nations bodies to help the Palestinian Authority to carry out its duties, particularly during the interim period. At the same time, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude for the great efforts you are making to uphold the national and political rights of the Palestinian people, in fulfilment of your commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international legitimacy.

LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Mr. Nouhak Phoumsavanh, President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

[Original: French]

On the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and on behalf of the Government and people of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and in my own name I should like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to you and to the other members of the Committee for the devotion you have demonstrated in carrying out your important tasks.

In the Middle East, the general situation is developing positively. The conclusion of the recent agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel last September concerning the extension of autonomy in the West Bank of the Jordan area marked a new and positive step in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles signed in Washington, D.C., in 1993.

True to their consistent policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world regardless of their socio-political regime, the Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic warmly welcomes the positive change in the situation in the region and hopes that it will help the various parties to the conflict to pursue their negotiations sincerely, in order to reach a comprehensive settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

We welcome this new step forward, which represents a crucial stage in the search for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the conflict, and we hope that under the determined leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization the Palestinian people will have even greater success in their tireless struggle to recover their inalienable national rights.

On this occasion, the Lao Government and people wish to reaffirm their active solidarity with the Palestinian people, and their willingness to do everything in their power to make their modest contribution to the cause of peace and cooperation in the region.

MALAYSIA

Mr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia

On this auspicious occasion to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I would like to reaffirm Malaysia's strong commitment and unwavering support to the Palestinian people in the attainment of all its inalienable rights to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State.

Since the beginning of the Madrid peace process in October 1991, the world has witnessed encouraging developments in Palestinian-Israeli peace process. While there have been some progress on the political front, the situation on the ground is far from satisfactory. On the contrary, the economic and social conditions have deteriorated. The restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli authorities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have exacerbated the economic hardship of the Palestinians living in those areas. I believe that all efforts must be taken to strengthen the economy and the living conditions of the Palestinians.

At the same time, it is important for the international community to urgently provide funding to the Palestinians to assist them with building and reconstruction efforts designed to mitigate their suffering. In this regard the role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in

the areas of education, health and relief and social services is commendable. The United Nations and its other specialized agencies must also offer full cooperation to the Palestinians to enable them to rebuild their economy and to develop their national institutions. It is essential that the United Nations continues to remain seized with the question of Palestine.

While recognizing that the peace process is fraught with difficulties, I believe that the successful progression of the peace process depends on the commitment and willingness of the parties concerned in the implementation of all the agreed provisions. Extremism and the recourse to terror tactics designed to derail the peace process must be resolutely rejected. I am confident that the present Palestinian leadership under President Yasser Arafat would lead the Palestinians to a just and successful conclusion in its endeavour to establish an independent Palestinian State.

I would like to commend the role of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for its splendid work and contribution towards the Palestinian cause. I wish the Committee success in its future tasks.

MALI

Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali

[Original: French]

On the occasion of the celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the pleasure to offer you my sincere congratulations on the important contribution made by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to the positive developments in the situation in the Middle East. In this regard, I should like to reaffirm Mali's firm commitment to work towards the creation of an independent Palestinian State in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

MAURITANIA

Mr. Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

[Original: French]

The observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People gives me the welcome opportunity to offer the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and particularly Chairman Yasser Arafat, our warmest congratulations for their untiring efforts to recover the inalienable rights of the fraternal Palestinian people.

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is pleased to note that the Middle East peace process begun at the Madrid conference and fleshed out by the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed in Washington, D.C., continues to make appreciable progress. The most recent agreement, signed at Washington on 28 September 1995, provides for the imminent extension of autonomy to the whole of the West Bank. Mauritania, having always hoped that a just and lasting peace would be established in the whole of the Middle Eastern region, and having always displayed solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people, can only welcome these momentous advances on the road to peace and cooperation in the whole region. It therefore continues to encourage the partners for peace in the region, particularly the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli Government, to redouble their efforts to give tangible form to the hopes for this peace so long awaited, and to give the region the stability it needs for the social and economic development of all their peoples.

We trust that the courage and tenacity shown up until now by the principal pioneers and negotiators will also make it possible to find a just and lasting solution, acceptable under international law, for the Holy City of Jerusalem, central to the three revealed religions.

We also trust that the United Nations and the whole international community will continue to give their important support to the realization of the just aspiration of the Palestinian people to establish a Palestinian national State.

On this day of observance, we remember all those martyrs who have shed their blood to bring about an era of peace, justice and harmony in the Middle East, the cradle of great civilizations.

PAKISTAN

Mrs. Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto,
Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Pakistan reaffirms its complete solidarity with the Palestinian people in their just struggle for the realization of their legitimate aspirations.

While expressing our support for the ongoing Middle East peace process, we pay a special tribute to President Yasser Arafat for the outstanding contribution made by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to promote and carry forward this process.

The agreements concluded between the PLO and Israel constitute significant steps toward a just and durable peace, which would enable the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State in their homeland, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

Pakistan also appeals to the international community, particularly the United Nations, to provide to the Palestinian National Authority urgent assistance in its efforts to rebuild the Palestinian economy and consolidate its control over the liberated areas.

We eagerly look forward to the day when Palestine will join the ranks of independent and sovereign States and occupy its rightful place as a Member of the United Nations.

PHILIPPINES

Mr. Fidel V. Ramos, President of the Republic of the Philippines

I convey the solidarity of the Philippine Government and the Filipino people with the Palestinian people on this auspicious occasion. I join the international community in expressing once again our unity with the Palestinian nation in its rightful struggle for statehood.

In the past months, we have witnessed tremendous progress towards Palestinian self-determination. We pay homage to President Yasser Arafat and the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for the far-reaching agreement they concluded in September resolving the issue of the West Bank, a fundamental cornerstone laid for the establishment

of a Palestinian State. We also pay tribute to the martyrs to the cause of peace in the Middle East, and dedicate ourselves to the continuation of their noble quest.

May we also congratulate the United Nations, particularly the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the advancement of the cause of Palestine and all Palestinians.

QATAR

Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar

[Original: Arabic]

I am pleased to address you on this important occasion, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a solidarity that has advanced the cause of this militant people by virtue of the world's belief in the justice of its cause and its inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination and to establish an independent State on the soil of the Palestinian homeland, which has been ransomed by the pure blood of tens of thousands of innocent martyrs. This long-suffering people has been deprived of the most basic human rights enjoyed by every Member of our international Organization.

We observe this day in a year that is characterized by the Agreement between the Palestinians and Israel on the extension of self-rule and the strengthening of the Palestinian authority to cover new portions of Palestinian territory. The Jenin area has been liberated, and we hope that its liberation will be followed by that of the remaining occupied Palestinian territory. This is one of the fruits of the Middle East peace process, which enjoys broad-based international support. This year was also characterized by the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, and we hope that its continuing implementation will ensure the realization of further long-sought achievements in all areas.

At this turning-point in the history of the Palestinian people, Qatar vehemently calls upon the international community to uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, which Qatar, just like the other Islamic States, considers to be of the utmost importance in any settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict because of the lofty status of Jerusalem in the minds of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Qatar therefore reaffirms that it is essential for the international community to preserve the legitimate status of Jerusalem and underscores its rejection of any attempt to change that status by moving embassies accredited to Israel to Jerusalem. We also stress that Palestinian self-rule must be extended to cover all Palestinian territory and all aspects of the economic, social and cultural aspects of the Palestinian people, which would enable the Palestinian people to build the necessary infrastructure, most of which has been destroyed by the Israeli occupation. That is, unquestionably, a responsibility to be shouldered by the international community as a whole, on the basis of its awareness of the demands of this important phase in the Palestinian peace process, if it is to achieve its objective.

In conclusion, I should like to convey my gratitude and appreciation to all participants in this event and to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman for their laudable work. I wish the Committee further success so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise all its legitimate rights and realize its hope for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine on the basis of justice, peace and security in the Middle East and throughout the world.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Mr. Boris Yeltsin, President of the Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]

[Addressed to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO, Mr. Yasser Arafat]

I am pleased to convey to you and all Palestinians my warm congratulations and best wishes on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Enormous efforts have been made this year to bring about a decisive change for the better in the Middle East. We note with satisfaction that despite the remaining problems and opposition from extremists, progress is being made towards establishing peaceful, good-neighbourly and cooperative relations there. We are gratified to learn that the peace process begun in Madrid with Russian sponsorship is starting to bring the peoples of the region the real fruits of increasing trust and harmony.

I am sure that the increasing extent of Palestinian autonomy and the forthcoming elections to the Palestinian Council will be an important milestone in realizing the hopes and aspirations of all Palestinians. We are confident that the Palestinian Authority is doing everything in its power to consolidate the progress that has been made and to ensure the practical implementation of the agreement with Israel.

You may reliably count on the cooperation and support of the Russian Federation. We have common goals - a just and lasting peace, and order and constructive development in the Middle East.

SAUDI ARABIA

Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King of Saudi Arabia

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the international community's observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we appreciate your Committee's efforts in support of the endeavours of the Palestinian people for the restoration of its rights, and reaffirm our previous statements in support of this international initiative calling for solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The steadfast positions of Saudi Arabia on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people stem from its absolute faith in the legitimacy of these rights and from its adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in international instruments, first and foremost, the Charter of the United Nations, the Pact of the League of Arab States and the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Since the emergence of the Palestinian cause, Israel's occupation of Arab territory and the expulsion of the Palestinian people, Saudi Arabia has devoted diligent attention and endeavour to redressing the injustice perpetrated against its people by providing it with all forms of material and moral assistance. Since the first precursors of peace emerged in the region, Saudi Arabia has supported the Madrid peace conference in all efforts aimed at Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territory and the transfer of further powers to the Palestinian National Authority.

In this context, the Government of Saudi Arabia, at the international conference of donors held in Washington in 1993, pledged the sum of $100 million to meet the urgent development needs of the Palestinian economy. It

also pledged a further sum of $100 million for the Palestinian National Authority at the meeting of the ministerial liaison committee to coordinate assistance to Palestinians, held in Washington on 29 September 1995.

Saudi Arabia, in its unremitting effort to promote the peace efforts aimed at ending Israeli occupation of Arab territory and at the implementation of the relevant international resolutions, in particular, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and in accordance with the points agreed on at the Madrid peace conference, calls upon the international community, in particular the co-sponsors of the peace conference (the United States of America and the Russian Federation) to exert pressure on Israel to comply with the resolutions adopted with regard to the Palestinian people, to heed the voice of peace, which calls for the accordance to the Palestinian people of its legitimate rights, a halt to the placing of obstacles in the path of the peace process and a halt to the building of settlements and to arbitrary practices inflicted on the Palestinian people and proof of good faith regarding peace in the region, inasmuch as any lasting and comprehensive settlement must encompass the question of the return of Palestinian refugees, the release of prisoners and the question of the settlements that Israel has established, and is establishing, in the occupied territories, in contravention of the letter and the spirit of the Declaration of Principles and the provisions of international law and the Geneva Conventions.

The question of Jerusalem, which lies at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is still a focal issue for the Arab and the Islamic worlds in particular and the international community in general, and the future of the peace process depends on it, because there can be no lasting peace in the Middle East without arrival at a just solution of this issue that takes into account the relevant United Nations resolutions.

We ask God to guide us all to a successful conclusion.

SENEGAL

Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal

[Original: French]

The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, their annexes and the related Memorandum of Understanding in Washington on 13 September 1993 has heralded the dawn of a new era of peace and reconciliation in the Middle East, and particularly in Palestine, between the peoples of the region.

The noble and difficult course which Palestinian and Israeli leaders have courageously chosen to pursue has proved even more arduous owing to acts of intolerance and violence committed by extremists from both sides who are intent on setting obstacles in the way of peace.

Thus it was that, on 4 November 1995, one of the chief architects of the peace, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, tragically fell victim to the blind hatred of the enemies of peace.

For the overwhelming majority of Palestinians and Israelis committed to peace, and for all those in the Middle East and throughout the world who support this process, these tribulations strengthen the conviction that a negotiated solution is the only way to achieve a lasting settlement of the issue.

In this context, Palestinian and Israeli leaders need to pursue their negotiations with determination in order to implement the Washington and Cairo Agreements, which are the best guarantee for the establishment of a just and lasting peace, rapidly and in their entirety.

In this respect, the Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, was another milestone on this road.

Following the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May 1994 and the Erez Agreement of 29 August 1994, it extends Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and stipulates arrangements for the democratic election of a Palestinian Council which will exercise authority and be responsible for security in the West Bank and Gaza.

Senegal reaffirms their unreserved support for these Agreements, the implementation of which should enable the Parties to proceed without delay to final negotiations on permanent status and to bring about an overall settlement in accordance with the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

During this crucial phase of the peace process the Parties concerned need, to a greater extent than before, the renewed support of the international community, particularly that the United Nations, whose commitment and involvement should continue until all aspects of the Palestinian question have been resolved in a manner acceptable to all.

In this context, the international community should make a specific contribution to consolidating what has been achieved by providing the Palestinian people and their leaders with follow-up assistance in the difficult task of establishing national institutions and infrastructures.

The significant work which has been done in this sphere by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund deserves to be supported and strengthened with a view to improving the conditions of the Palestinian people and boosting their confidence in the future.

On this special occasion to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is important to stress the important role that the United Nations should continue to play in seeing the peace process through to their conclusion.

At the same time, we should pay a deserved tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and also to his Special Coordinator and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their continuing efforts in support of the Palestinian cause; they should also be commended for strengthening the competence of the nascent Palestinian institutions during this transitional period.

I wish also to extend my congratulations and encouragement to non-governmental organizations and to people of good will all over the world who have made an invaluable contribution to the search for peace in Palestine.

With every passing day the spectre of war and destruction is retreating in Palestine. We must constantly endeavour to bring about the triumph of the ideals of peace, justice and solidarity in Palestine and the Middle East, ideals which have inspired the courageous Palestinian and Israeli leaders to wage a noble battle for peace.

SPAIN

Mr. Felipe Gonzalez, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain

[Original: Spanish]

It is my pleasure to convey to you my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The year 1995 has seen major progress towards a just and last.. peace in the Middle East; dialogue, understanding and cooperation are gradually prevailing over the climate of confrontation which existed until recently.

Despite the moments of tragedy with which these important achievements have been interspersed, I am convinced that none of the parties concerned will fail to take advantage of this historic occasion to make irreversible progress on the path of peace. The recent signing in Washington of the Interim Agreement between Israelis and Palestinians and the forthcoming elections for the establishment of the Palestinian Council are proof of the political will and historic responsibility of the two peoples.

I also find it significant that this occasion coincides with the Euro-Mediterranean Conference at Barcelona, which will lead to a better life for people in the region.

Spain reiterates their deep commitment to the cause of peace, political stability and economic development in the Middle East. In that context, we shall continue to provide support to the national Palestinian Authority.

SRI LANKA

Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga,
President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has always regarded the question of Palestine as the crux of the Middle East problem and we have remained unwavering in our firm and consistent support for the struggle of the Palestinian People to realize their inalienable rights.

We therefore share the satisfaction of others in the international community as well over progress so far achieved in Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, despite delays and obstacles. We welcome the agreements reached in September 1995 on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which we hope would advance the prospects of a viable and permanent peace in the Middle East.

On this occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am happy to reiterate Sri Lanka's solidarity with them and to convey our sincerest good wishes for their well-being.

THAILAND

Mr. Banharn Silpa-Archa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I should like, on behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, to reiterate our consistent and full support for the continuing efforts of the United Nations and all parties concerned to attain the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine through the Middle East peace process in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Thailand follows with great interest the recent positive developments in the Middle East peace process from the enunciation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993 to the signing of the Peace Accord for Palestinian Autonomy two years later on 28 September 1995. I should therefore like to pay tribute to both the PLO and Israel for their perseverance and determination to achieve peace

in the region. Although the sudden departure of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel, who had unwaveringly devoted himself to the cause of peace, is a great loss, I hope all parties concerned will, from this loss, draw renewed strength in working towards achieving peace in the Middle East.

Thailand will continue to do its part to support the peaceful efforts of all parties to bring about the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. In this connection, we call upon the international community as well as relevant international organizations to continue to render their assistance in improving the economic well-being and social conditions of the Palestinian people. I also wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. As an observer, Thailand stands ready to support the Committee in its undertakings.

TUNISIA

Mr. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, President of the Republic of Tunisia

[Original: Arabic]

This year, the observance of the International Day of Solidarity coincides with a further major step on the road towards the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East region, as represented in the agreement on the extension of the self-government zone in the West Bank and the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority in its main towns, opening up genuine perspectives for the Palestinian people in the realization of its hopes for the restoration of all its national rights to self-determination and the establishment of its independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

As we salute today the Committee on the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, we reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people, like all peoples, to live in its independent territory in security and peace and the need to assist it in the establishment and strengthening of its national institutions.

The United Nations, whose fiftieth anniversary we recently celebrated and which has played a major role in decolonization and the maintenance and promotion of peace throughout the world, is called upon today, more than at any time than in the past - following the encouraging steps that it has made within the framework of the Middle East peace process - to affirm its commitment to the Palestinian cause, to make it its foremost concern and to assist the Palestinian people in its efforts to gain sovereignty over the territory of its homeland and to realize its aspirations for development and progress.

We should like on this occasion to reiterate our call to the international community, particularly donor countries and parties, to redouble its efforts to rally to the support of the Palestinian Authority and help it to lay an infrastructure and make the land prosper, in order that the Palestinian people may enjoy the fruits of peace in its daily life.

Today, Tunisia conveys once again to the United Nations Committee its resolve to continue to support the process of establishing a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East region. We wish it continued success in the performance of its noble mission of support for the Palestinian people so that it may regain all its rights and that security and that peace may be established in this region and the efforts of our peoples directed towards global progress and development.

TURKEY

Mrs. Tansu Çiller, Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is a pleasure for me to reiterate our continuing firm support for the Palestinian people in attaining their legitimate rights.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been successful over the years in promoting wider awareness within the international community of the plight of the Palestinian people, thus securing stronger support for their legitimate cause.

Turkey supports the Middle East peace process based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) from its very beginning. We think that this is the only realistic way to settle the long-lasting dispute. We regard the breakthrough in the peace process and the signing of the agreements on 28 September 1995 as important developments which herald the establishment of a just and durable peace, and the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the best wishes of the Turkish nation and the Turkish Government to the Palestinian people in their determined efforts for the realization of their legitimate aspirations within the framework of a just and lasting peace in the region.

UKRAINE

Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine

Please accept my sincere greetings on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Ukraine, one of the founders of the United Nations, a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian Agreement on the second stage of a peaceful settlement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995.

I wish to express the hope that practical implementation of this document will contribute to continuation of the resultative negotiating process towards the final settlement of the problem by political means, the establishment of lasting peace and mutual understanding in the Middle East, and will serve the cause of the exercise by the Palestinian people of its right to national self-determination - the creation of the independent State of Palestine. I am certain that manifestations of extremism will not be able to stop the peace process that has no alternative.

I would like once again to confirm that the Palestinian people, who have always enjoyed great respect in Ukraine, may continue to rely on the support of our State in the future.

The achievement of peace in the Middle East will promote, first of all, the economic development and stabilization of the region. In this context Ukraine, with its considerable scientific and technical potential, is ready to establish an active Ukrainian-Palestinian cooperation, in particular, in the economic sphere.

Availing myself of this opportunity, I would like to thank you for your personal contribution to the cause of settlement of the conflict by means of a constructive peace dialogue, and to wish you, Mr. Chairman, strong health and successes in your responsible activities.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahayan, President of the United Arab Emirates

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I am happy to convey to you and to the members of your distinguished Committee, on behalf of the Government and people of the United Arab Emirates, the sincerest appreciation and gratitude for the untiring efforts that you make in order to assist the Palestinian Arab people in the exercise of its inalienable rights and to acquaint the international community with the justice of its cause and with the developments that take place in connection with the issue by the constant affirmation of the relevant United Nations resolutions as the basis for addressing an international issue that came into being with the establishment of the United Nations and that has received a great deal of its attention.

The initial positive results achieved in the negotiations between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, including, most recently, the Taba agreement of September 1995 on the extension of self-government in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, constitute an important and essential step towards the achievement of the national aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination. This has met with the support of the United Arab Emirates, just as the country supported in the past the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and the subsequent series of implementing agreements based on the principle of land for peace.

The United Arab Emirates, which continues to feel concern at the continuing deterioration in the humanitarian situation and living conditions of the Palestinian people, today renews its call for the implementation of the agreements concluded by the Palestinian National Authority and Israel. At the same time, it is of the view that it of the utmost importance that the United Nations and its specialized agencies should continue to meet their responsibilities in the matter until such time as the Palestinian people is able to exercise its inalienable rights and that they should assume the major role in supervising the implementation of the principles of the settlement and the confidence-building measures, particularly with regard to such questions as bringing an end to the settlement policy, the expropriation of Arab land, deportations, violence and violations of the human rights of the Palestinian Arab people. They should also have a fundamental role in inducing the Israeli authorities to halt measures for bringing about demographic change and practices aimed at Judaizing Islamic Holy Places and altering their religious and historical character, particularly in the Holy City of Jerusalem. All such measures are null and void, have no legal status and are in flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the provisions of international law and the fourth Geneva Convention and the principles established by the agreements between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel governing the ongoing peace process.

We are moved by our great hopes for the achievement of a just and lasting settlement to the Palestine issue constantly to renew our support and backing for the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to affirm the importance of its role as an organ of the General Assembly that performs the necessary tasks of urging the international community to keep the situation with respect to the question of Palestine under review, making positive contributions in support of United Nations efforts to require the Israeli Government to discharge its obligations with respect to the implementation of the peace agreements and mobilizing world public opinion in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian Arab people. Accordingly, affirming our continued solidarity with and full support for the just struggle of the Palestinian Arab people and renewing our pledge to provide it with aid and assistance, we in the United Arab Emirates call upon the international community to meet in full its responsibilities with regard to assistance to the Palestinian people in order to enable that people to advance its economic and social development, secure all of its legitimate rights, establish an independent Palestinian State on its national soil with its capital at Jerusalem and promote peace, security, stability and development in its own country like the other peoples of the world.

VIET NAM

Mr. Le Duc Anh, President of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 29 November, I would like to extend to you and, through you, to all Palestinian people, our solidarity greetings and warmest congratulations.

Following the signing of the peace agreement by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, the peace process in the Middle East has made new achievements in the past year, creating the prospect for a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We believe that with efforts made by all parties concerned, the peace process in the Middle East, despite many difficulties and obstacles still ahead, will continue. We are of the view that it is necessary to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in the Middle East, ensuring inalienable, fundamental national rights of the Palestinian people and legitimate interests of all parties concerned.

The Government and people of Viet Nam have always supported the just cause of the Palestinian people and believe that the just cause of the Palestinian people will soon achieve a final success.

ZIMBABWE

Mr. Robert Gabriel Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

I am particularly pleased that the happy occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is once again being celebrated at a time when the peace process in the Middle East and, in particular, between the Palestinians and Israelis, remains on course.

The Government and people of Zimbabwe and I are happy to extend to you and through you to the Palestinian people best wishes on this landmark day.

I wish you personal good health and success in your endeavours to conclude a lasting settlement. Please accept, dear brother and colleague, the assurances of my highest esteem.

B. Messages from Governments

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Central People's Committee of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

[addressed to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization]

The Central People's Committee of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea expresses its firm solidarity to you and the Palestinian people on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Palestinian people have been waging a vigorous struggle for national independence and liberation under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remains unchanged in their support to and solidarity with the just cause of the Palestinian people.

Believing that the friendly relations between the peoples of two countries continue to be strengthened and developed, we wish you and the Palestinian people further successes in your struggle to resolve the Palestinian question in the interest of the Palestinian people.

FRANCE

[Original: French]

On this International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, France sends you their best wishes. We welcome the progress which has been made in the peace process and hope that it will lead as quickly as possible to the establishment of a lasting and balanced peace in the region. France is gratified that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are about to be recognized. It pays tribute to the courage and ambition of all the parties which, by becoming involved in this process, have resolved to recognize each other and to coexist by ending 40 years of conflict. True to their friendship with the Palestinian people, France will continue to provide political and material support for their emancipation.

GUYANA

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 29 November, the Government and people of Guyana are pleased to extend their best wishes to the Palestinian people and to reiterate their support for the successful conclusion of the current peace process.

Guyana is heartened by the assurances that the recent tragic death of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will not nullify the 5 October 1995 agreement on Israeli troop withdrawal from a significant position of the West Bank by the end of March 1996 and on the transfer of civil authority to an elected Palestinian council.

It is the sincere hope of the Government and people of Guyana that someday the scars will be healed and peace will be realized in a region that has known strife for much too long.

As a member of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Guyana remains convinced that the determination and good faith of both sides, coupled with the help and goodwill of the international community, are key to a successful culmination of the peace process.

SOUTH AFRICA

It is with deep sense of satisfaction that the Government of National Unity of the Republic of South Africa has noted the ongoing implementation of agreements reached by Palestinian and Israeli negotiators on the basis of the Declaration of Principles. This is the more so given attempts by extremists to delay or destroy the inevitable process towards peace in the Middle East - peace from which not only the Palestinian people, but all the countries of that region will benefit and which provides the only conceivable means of promoting reconciliation and common respect for all their peoples.

To this extent the South African Government pays tribute to the dedication and vision of those leaders who,

despite the pressures of those forces seeking to destroy what has been won thus far, have shown the courage to persevere in the quest for a negotiated solution. Indeed, it is only through this process that the rights of all people in the region can be addressed in accordance with internationally accepted norms and practices.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People therefore, the South African Government wishes to express its unqualified support for the continuing process aimed at achieving a peaceful dispensation under which the people of Palestine can live in the dignity, prosperity and security they deserve—an achievement which will form a lasting tribute to those leaders and citizens committed to peace.

C. Messages from Ministers for Foreign Affairs

ARGENTINA

Mr. Guido Di Tella, Minister for External Relations, International Commerce and Culture

[Original: Spanish]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Government of the Argentine Republic reiterates its genuine pleasure at the remarkable progress achieved in the peace process.

The Interim Agreement on the expansion of Palestinian authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, is a fundamental achievement for the peace and stability of the region. It also demonstrates the foresight and resolution of the Israeli and Palestinian authorities.

The Argentine Republic believes that socio-economic development and an improved quality of life for the Palestinian people are essential elements for strengthening the peace process in the Middle East. For that reason, the Argentine Government and the Palestinian authorities are considering the possibility of assistance through the White Helmets initiative. Projects are well under way in the areas of water treatment, hospital infrastructure and vocational retraining for young people.

The Argentine Republic continues to support and encourage the efforts of all the countries in the region to achieve a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. In that regard, we welcome the growing dialogue between the Kingdom of Jordan and the State of Israel.

The Argentine Government reiterates their support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination within their own territory and for the right of their neighbours to live within secure and internationally recognized boundaries within the framework of the provisions of United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1974).

BRAZIL

Mr. Luis Felipe Lampreia, Minister for External Relations

On behalf of the Government and people of Brazil, I wish to extend to the Palestinian people my sincerest greetings and best wishes on the occasion of its International Day of Solidarity.

Over the last years, we have been witnessing dramatic breakthroughs in the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis. In this regard, the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip on 28 September 1995 represents a major achievement in the peace process in the Middle East. The Government of Brazil strongly hopes that continued understanding between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel will soon create an atmosphere allowing the Palestinian people to full exercise its legitimate right to self-determination.

The Brazilian Government restates its commitment to all international initiatives conducive to the consolidation of peace in the Middle East. In this spirit, the Brazilian Government held the United Nations Regional Seminar and NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine for Latin America and the Caribbean, from 20 to 23 March 1995, at Rio de Janeiro. The meeting was an important opportunity for the countries of the region to exchange views and consider ways and means to improve the relationship between Latin America and Caribbean countries and the Palestinian Authority.

Brazil has also sought to support the peace initiatives in the Middle East from an economic perspective, in the firm belief that economic development is an integral part of the process. With this in mind, Brazil had an active participation in the Middle East/North Africa economic summits held at Casablanca and Amman.

The relations between our Government and the Palestinian Authority have grown progressively closer over the years. The opening of the Office of the Palestinian Special Delegation at Brasília, with the pertaining diplomatic status, and the recognition of passports issued by the Palestinian Authority, represent concrete steps in that direction. The visit I paid to Gaza and President Yasser Arafat's first official visit to Brazil last month stress our willingness to broaden our dialogue.

COLOMBIA

Mr. Rodrigo Pardo García-Peña, Minister for Foreign Relations

[Original: Spanish]

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of Colombia wishes to join in the activities of the international community on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to be celebrated on 29 November 1995.

The Government of Colombia has followed with the greatest interest the evolution of the process begun at Madrid in 1991, which points to the possibility of a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict which has affected the Middle East for so long.

Colombia supports the establishment of a Palestinian State in the region within a framework of coexistence and mutual respect among the neighbouring States, and reaffirms their desire to contribute to the effective implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people.

GREECE

Mr. Karolos Papoulias, Minister for Foreign Affairs

On 29 November 1995, Greece expresses its solidarity with the Palestinian people and congratulates them on their dedication to peace, which resulted in the signing of the Interim Agreement on 28 September 1995.

We earnestly hope that both Israel and the PLO will soon enter into the final status negotiations in order to achieve a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian issue. Thus, peoples in the area will be able to live in a climate of trust, peace and stability, where all parties will recognize and respect each other's rights.

In the meantime, Greece, as in the past, will spare no effort in assisting, to the extent of its ability, the Palestinian people, both bilaterally and as a member of the European Union.

JAPAN

Mr. Yohei Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to extend my congratulations on the occasion of the United Nations eighteenth International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Middle East peace process, which began with the Madrid Conference in October 1991, has made further progress in 1995. In September an agreement was reached on the expansion of Palestinian interim self-government. The Israeli army in the West Bank is to be redeployed, and an election for the Palestinian Council is scheduled to take place, perhaps as early as the beginning of 1996. It is our hope that the Palestinian interim self-government will steadily accumulate experience, the Israel-Syrian Arab Republic and Israel-Lebanon talks will make progress, and peace will be achieved in the entire Middle East region as soon as possible.

Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama of Japan visited the Middle East in September 1995 where he held frank discussions on the promotion of peace in the Middle East with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic, Israel, the Gaza Strip and Jordan. He also affirmed Japan's policy of continuing to provide positive support to the Palestinian people, of commencing direct assistance to the Palestinian people, and of assisting in the election of the Palestinian Council by providing as much personnel and material cooperation as possible.

In the same month, as the representative of the Government of Japan, I visited Washington to attend the signing ceremony for the agreement on the expansion of Palestinian interim self-government and a ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee on assistance to Palestinians, where I affirmed Japan's policy of continued assistance. To date Japan has disbursed about $150 million worth of assistance to the Palestinian people. In the future also, Japan intends to cooperate in the promotion of a political dialogue with the parties concerned in the peace process, the building of confidence among the parties directly concerned in the talks through multilateral discussions on Middle East peace and the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, and supporting countries around Israel.

The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin earlier this month was a tragic incident. I attended Prime Minister Rabin's funeral as a special envoy of the Prime Minister. The parties concerned in the peace process have declared their determination to overcome this tragedy and to continue their efforts toward the realization of peace. I hope that the talks between Palestinians and Israel also continue to move forward and they will not yield to violence.

It is my sincere wish that a comprehensive, just and permanent peace will be achieved in the Middle East, and that all the people of the region, including the Palestinians, will enjoy stability and prosperity in the very near future.

LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA

Mr. Omar Mustafa Muntasser, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation

[Original: Arabic]

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I have the honour to reaffirm the solidarity of the entire people of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya with the fraternal Palestinian people in its just struggle to end the Zionist occupation of its land and its Holy Places and to exercise its inalienable national rights and primarily the right to exercise self-determination and establish an independent State in all of Palestine.

The question of Palestine has been a major preoccupation of the United Nations since its establishment. Through its major organs and its various bodies, the Organization has contributed to the efforts of the international community to promote the Palestinian cause. It has adopted many resolutions in that regard and has made a sustained endeavour to devise a comprehensive and just solution to the issue. Despite international efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Middle East and the latest developments referred to as the peace agreements between the Israelis and the Palestinians, the Israelis have not ceased their violations of United Nations resolutions on Jerusalem, particularly Security Council resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971), 476 (1980), 672 (1990) and 904 (1994), in which the Council called upon the Israeli occupation authorities to rescind all measures purporting to alter the status of Jerusalem on the grounds that they were null and void. The Israelis have been exempted from compliance with these resolutions because of the entirely biased position adopted by the United States, and this has encouraged them to persist in such violations. The most recent example to this effect has been the assent of the United States Congress to a bill concerning the transfer of the United States embassy to occupied Jerusalem, implying official recognition by the United States of America that Jerusalem is a capital for the Israelis. This is to be considered a flagrant violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980, in which the Council called upon States that had established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City. The persistence of the Israeli occupation authorities in oppressing the Palestinian people, establishing and expanding settlements, expropriating land and property, violating the Haram al-Ibrahimi and desecrating Islamic Holy Places demonstrates the intransigence of the Israelis, their defiance of the will of the international community and their contempt for all international covenants and conventions and humanitarian values.

My country believes that a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestine issue is a matter for the United Nations, which has been entrusted with the task of maintaining international peace and security and which shall continue to bear prime and lasting responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine until such time as there is a just settlement of the issue in all its aspects. The Organization must strive for the implementation of its resolutions, and must take the necessary deterrent measures to ensure respect for the resolutions it has been adopting for decades past, so as to guarantee the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to exercise self-determination, return to the land from which it was forcibly expelled and establish an independent State. This is the first objective that must be achieved by a comprehensive, just and definitive peace. It is the reason that motivated my country to accede to the request of the Palestinians in its territory to facilitate their return. We urged all the Arab countries in which there are Palestinian refugees seeking for more than 50 years to return to their homeland to do likewise and to enable those refugees to return to their country and to the homes and fields from which the Israeli occupiers forcibly expelled them, as witnessed by the United Nations, and to establish a democratic State in all of Palestine in which both Arabs and Jews can live. Failing a solution like that achieved in South Africa, peace will not be established in the region and a conflict that threatens international peace and security will persist.

In conclusion, we assert our firm support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to defend its legitimate national rights, we renew our commitment to strive for the restoration of its usurped rights, and we firmly support

the heroic struggle it is waging to defend its interests and legitimate national aspirations and its right to exercise self-determination. We express our appreciation of the tireless efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to enable the Palestinian people to regain all of its usurped rights, and principally its right to self-determination.

We are sure that, by its struggle and by its courage, the Palestinian people will achieve its desired goal of freedom and independence regardless of how long that takes.

OMAN

Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

[Original: Arabic]

At this annual meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, I should like to praise you and all the members of the Committee for your contribution over the years to the international endeavours to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people and to enable it to exercise its legitimate rights in its territory and in its homeland.

The participation of the Sultanate, together with the other States Members of the United Nations, in the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, is a result of the unshakeable principles underlying Omani policies urging the need to support the Palestinian people and the realization of its just demand to live in peace, security and dignity on its own land, alongside other peoples. The realization of this demand is a top priority of Omani foreign policy. Similarly, it has supported previous and ongoing international efforts to reach a just and comprehensive settlement and has called for peaceful co-existence and the establishment of international law in the region.

In the name of the Sultanate, we salute the immense sacrifices made by this people in order to realize its just demands and express our full support for the important steps that have been taken in the Middle East peace process since the Madrid conference was held in 1991. The Sultanate has encouraged the various parties to continue to move forward and make steady progress towards radical solutions, despite the obstacles and difficulties that the peace process has faced and will face in the future.

His Majesty the Sultan reaffirmed this policy in the speech he gave on 18 November 1995 on the occasion of the nation's twenty-fifth national day or silver jubilee:

> "With regard to the question of the Middle East, we supported the peace and called for it to be concluded on all fronts, including the Syrian and Lebanese fronts, where it should be on the basis of full withdrawal from the Golan and southern Lebanon. We reaffirm here our steadfast position on this matter and demand that what has been agreed should be fully implemented, and that no obstacles should be fabricated to prevent that. Serious steps must be taken to reach a just resolution of the remaining problems."

The agreement which was concluded in Washington in September 1995 augurs well, calling for the extension of Palestinian self-rule and the hand-over of control of the city of Jenin to the Palestinian authorities as the first stage in the process of ending the Israeli occupation of the remaining Palestinian territory and realizing the ultimate goal of extending the authority of the Palestinian people throughout its territory and building a national entity.

Such progress could not have been made without determined efforts at the international and regional levels such as those supported by this Committee, which we hope will continue its work in order to realize its lofty goals. We urge the Committee to direct the attention of international participants in this commemoration such as the

banking establishments to the need for them to continue to provide material and moral support to the Palestinian people in order to alleviate its suffering and to support the peace process and the exertion of international pressure on Israel to move forward towards a comprehensive peace in the region based on just foundations.

In conclusion, I should like, in the name of the Sultanate, to express our appreciation for the endeavours of this Committee, and reaffirm our complete and enduring support for it in its contribution to the establishment of peace and security in the Middle East.

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Mr. Gong Ro-Myung, Minister for Foreign Affairs

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, it is a pleasure for me to reiterate, on behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Korea, our continuing firm support for the Palestinian people in its courageous efforts to achieve national independence for self-government.

The Republic of Korea has followed with keen interest the current peace process in the Middle East which began at Madrid in October 1991, and welcomes the signing of the agreement on the extension of Palestinian autonomy to the West Bank in September 1995. We are certain that the agreement, as a significant follow-up to the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of September 1993, will contribute to achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

While welcoming the positive developments in the region, the Republic of Korea will continue close cooperation with the Palestinian people for the improvement of its living conditions and the economic and social development of the region.

As part of such efforts, the Republic of Korea has been providing $10 million to the Economic Development Cooperation Fund and $2 million as grant aid for the period from 1994 to 1998, and will continue to expand assistance to the Palestinian people to help rebuild its economy and develop its national institutions.

Finally, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their untiring efforts towards bringing about a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine.

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Mr. Farouq Al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs

[Original: Arabic]

I have the pleasure to join you in observing the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. On this occasion, we once again salute the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and in the diaspora, and affirm our abiding support for it in its just struggle for the restoration of its full and complete national rights and, primarily, its right to exercise self-determination in the same manner as other peoples in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic, whose history is linked with the defence of the Palestinian cause, for which it has made many significant sacrifices, will continue to strive for a just and comprehensive peace based on Security

Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace, which will ensure Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, since peace cannot be built upon occupied land and usurped rights.

In view of the importance that the Syrian Arab Republic attaches to the return to Arab control of the city of Jerusalem, as part of the territory occupied since 1967, it reaffirms its strong opposition to the decision by the United States Congress to transfer the Embassy of the United States of America to Jerusalem. This decision violates the principles of international law and legitimate international rulings and offends the sensibilities of millions of Arabs, both Christian and Muslim.

We salute the efforts of your Committee in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people, and, together with the international community, we look forward to the day when the region will enjoy a comprehensive and just peace that will spare its peoples the horrors of war and acts of violence and ensure their security, stability and prosperity.

UGANDA

Mr. Agard Didi, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

On the auspicious occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, held every 29 November in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 32/40 B, adopted on 2 December 1977, I have the honour and pleasure of extending to the Government and people of Palestine the sincere felicitations and best wishes of the Government and people of Uganda.

As we join the rest of the world in observing this great day, the Government and people of Uganda wish to reiterate their solidarity with the people of Palestine in their just struggle for their inalienable rights.

In this regard, Uganda supports the current peace process in the Middle East and hopes for a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the problems in the region.

Uganda welcomes the commitments of the parties concerned to continue with the peace process inspite of the heinous assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the late Prime Minister of Israel.

The great potential which propels the peoples of Israel, Palestine and the rest of the Middle East into an unprecedented era of peace and normalization of relations must continue to guide and energize their efforts towards a just and lasting peace.

D. Messages from intergovernmental organizations with observer status at the United Nations

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity

On the occasion of the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1995, I wish to reiterate my Organization's unequivocal and principled support for the just cause of the Palestinian people and extend to you this message of solidarity and best wishes.

We are well aware of your Committee's indefatigable efforts to sensitize world opinion on the rights of the Palestinian people. On our part, the solidarity of the Organization of African Unity with the Palestinian people is continually being manifested through its resolutions, statements and press releases.

No one can gainsay that there have been positive developments on the ground. We have witnessed the agreements signed by the PLO and the Israeli authorities in Washington and Cairo over the last few years. These agreements were the culmination of painstaking and protracted negotiations that showed statesmanship on both sides though remaining sticking points have yet to be resolved.

The slaying of the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin earlier this month forcibly demonstrates that opposition to the peace process is very rife and not found on only one side either. That being the case, it is incumbent upon us, the international community, to assist the interlocutors in overcoming the remaining obstacles so that peace would reign in the region.

I wish you every success in your noble endeavours and in the celebration of the day.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

Mr. Hamid Algabid, Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

The international community celebrates every year on 29 November the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/32 B adopted in 1977, and in expression of its solidarity with and full support to the just struggle carried out by the Palestinian people for the recovery of their inalienable national rights and the achievement of their freedom and independence.

This momentous event comes around this year as the Palestinian people are welcoming a new stage in their national struggle, following the withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from the Palestinian towns and villages in conformity with the second stage agreement as stipulated in the Declaration of Principles, in preparation for the expansion of the Palestinian self-rule area, the transfer of authorities and responsibilities to the Palestinian National Authority, the release of detainees, the holding of the elections for the Palestinian self-rule Governing Council, due to be held on 20 January 1996, as an important stepping stone for the Palestinian people's recovery and practice of their inalienable national rights, and the establishment of their national State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

On this occasion, the Secretary-General welcomes the progress achieved by the peace process in the Middle East and expresses the hope that the peace process will continue and achieve success on all tracks, including the Syrian and Lebanese ones, and that the city of Al-Quds al-Sharif will be restored to its legitimate owners. He reaffirms that the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which considers the issue of Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its foremost and central issue, will continue its action for the city's return to Palestinian sovereignty as capital of the State of Palestine.

Also on this occasion, the Secretary-General launches an appeal to all States to honour the international resolutions issued concerning the City of Al-Quds al-Sharif and considers that the recent decision of the United States Congress to transfer the United States Embassy to Al-Quds constitutes a violation of these resolutions, as well as a regressive step in the peace process, in disharmony with the major role played by the United States as co-sponsor of the process.

The Secretary-General expresses the hope that the United States Administration will exert all possible efforts in order to reverse this decision which poses a threat to the peace process and might undermine the ongoing efforts for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The Secretary-General also invites all the Member States and the international community to extend every form of assistance and support to the Palestinian people so that they may build up their independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

E. Messages from United Nations specialized agencies

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and of UNESCO must be the occasion for re-dedicating ourselves to the cause of peace-building. In recent times, no event had given greater cause for celebration than the signature of the Washington agreements between Israel and the PLO. The historic challenge confronting the international community is to help translate these agreements into practical measures to meet the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has underlined both the firm and irreversible resolve for peace and how many obstacles have to be overcome for the peace process to succeed. Concerted efforts are required to contribute to the reconstruction and development of the West Bank and Gaza as a vital condition of the Palestinian people's sustained support.

UNESCO is playing its part in these efforts of reconstruction and development through the provision of major financial and technical assistance under its regular programme. With the approval of the joint UNESCO/Palestinian Committee, it has also drawn up a special programme of assistance focused on institution-building, human resource development, employment creation and the establishment of a lasting peace in the region.

The needs in these and other domains are enormous and cannot be met without large-scale international cooperation. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is a call to the international community to demonstrate its active support and renewed commitment by strengthening its assistance to the Palestinian Authority for the construction of a democratic and prosperous society under the leadership of President Yasser Arafat, to whom I express my highest esteem on this special occasion.

F. Messages from United Nations bodies

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND

Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director

UNICEF initially provided assistance to Palestinian children and women in the late 1940s. Although the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the specialized United Nations agency for Palestinians, later became responsible for provision of basic services for Palestinians, UNICEF resumed support in the early 1980s. Currently, UNICEF supports programmes for Palestinian children and women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. This support is mainly in the fields of basic health, education, water supply and sanitation, income earning skills for women, and social programmes for children and youth.

Recently, UNICEF has taken advantage of the peace process to strengthen its capacity to serve Palestinian children and women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The UNICEF field office in Jerusalem has been strengthened with the appointment of a UNICEF Special Representative, together with a complement of local and international staff. Focal points for Palestinian children and women have been established at both UNICEF headquarters in New York and the UNICEF Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa located at Amman.

In 1995, the UNICEF Executive Board reviewed and adopted a policy paper on UNICEF assistance to Palestinian women and children. At the same time, a review of UNICEF-assisted programmes for Palestinian children and women in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic was undertaken in order to present recommendations to the Board for continuation of support. Likewise, programmes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip benefitted from the development of a long-term programme of action for Palestinian children undertaken by the Palestinian Authority with support from UNICEF and the Government of Sweden, the latter now designated by the United Nations as Shepherd for Palestinian Children. UNICEF coordinates its activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with the various agencies of the United Nations system through the Office of the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, and its programme is reflected in the overall United Nations programme, Putting Peace to Work. In addition to financing programmes from its general resources, UNICEF has also been seeking additional supplementary funding from donors and has received special funding from Italy, Sweden and, more recently, the European Union, among others. However, in view of the magnitude of needs, resource availability is not yet up to expectations, and UNICEF is encouraging donor partners to support the unique opportunities for constructive action which are at hand.

UNICEF has long recognized that children are the cornerstone of nation building and that their well-being is the most sensitive indicator of society's progress. The ongoing peace process brings with it opportunities for positive action previously unavailable for Palestinian children in the fields of health, education and social well-being, moving towards a broader application of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This process also includes capacity building among governmental and non-governmental Palestinian institutions with a view to meeting the challenges posed by the raised hopes and expectations of the population. There is a pressing need for the international community to help demonstrate the benefits of peace, and nowhere will this be more evident than in services for children and women.

F. Messages from non-governmental organizations

AMERICAN-ARAB ANTI-DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Hamzi K. Moghrabi, Chairman

On behalf of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Arab-American community in the United States, I extend a heartfelt message of solidarity to the Palestinian people.

Arab Americans remain committed to the principle of Palestinian self-determination. We support all efforts aimed at ensuring respect for Palestinian human and national rights. It is only when those principles are adhered to that a just and lasting peace can be attained in the region.

The Palestinian people have suffered long enough as they were uprooted from their homeland, driven away from their homes, stripped of their human rights, denied freedom and justice under a brutal military occupation. We celebrate the Palestinians' strength and courage in their suffering on this day of solidarity and we wish them the attainment of peace, freedom and justice as the peace process continues.

ASSOCIATION OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Dr. Ruchama Marton, Chairperson (PHR, Israel)

We are glad of the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to work against abuses of human and medical rights. Even though PHR welcomes the peace process, we still maintain that Israel has a moral responsibility to provide adequate health care for the Palestinian population in all the territories. PHR demands viable working conditions for medical professionals and human health conditions for detainees and prisoners.

PHR's staff and members send warm greetings to all contributors to the cause of the Palestinian people, and hopes that the peace process initiated in 1993 will indeed bring a just solution to the Palestinian people's problems.

CENTRO ITALIANO PER LA PACE IN MEDIO ORIENTE

On the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the Italian Centre for Peace in the Middle East, based in Milan, Italy, reaffirms its commitment to support the cause of the national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to build an independent Palestinian State in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, as a condition to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

COMISION ANDINA DE JURISTAS

Mr. Diego García-Sayán, Executive Director

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to be celebrated on 29 November 1995, I would like to express my solemn wishes of peace and solidarity.

I relay these wishes on behalf of the Andean Commission of Jurists, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, dedicated to the promotion of democracy, administration of justice, and human rights in the Andean region.

Additionally, I would like to express our support in the current peace process in the Middle East. Such activities as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People serve as an element in the interest of the peace process, providing international awareness for the need in the realization of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a goal that has long been sought. I earnestly hope that the resolve and dedication to peace shown by Israeli and Palestinian leaders will, in the course of negotiations, help build the foundations for a new post-conflict Middle East.

INDO-ARAB ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION

Mr. K. M. Khan, Chairman

The question of Palestine has been drawing the attention of the international community right from 1947 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II) providing the establishment of a "Jewish State" and the "Arab State of Palestine". The resolutions remains incomplete and unfulfilled despite the lapse of more than 47 years and thereby a situation of uncertainty is created in Palestine. It is unfortunate to note that despite the United Nations General Assembly adopting the famous "Partition Resolution" of 1948, the people of Palestine are yet to attain their inalienable rights of self-determination and national independence.

Indian people, who are part of the international community, have noted the events since September 1993 in the direction of establishing an independent State of Palestine through peace process and mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the sole representative body of the Palestinian people. We appreciate the signing of the Declaration of Principles in May 1994 on interim government arrangements and the Cairo Protocol on 27 August 1995 regarding transfer of powers and responsibilities to Palestinians. We consider these accords and arrangements as positive developments in achieving the inalienable rights of self-determination by the Palestinians.

As a non-governmental organization, we express our deep concern over the abnormal delay in finding a permanent solution to the question of Palestine in accordance with various United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which directs Israeli withdrawal from all occupied areas, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

While expressing our solidarity and support to the great Palestinian people on this historic occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, we place on record our hope and confidence that the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine and the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights will continue their laudable efforts to mobilize the opinion of the international community to persuade all parties to work for achieving lasting peace in the Middle East and for campaigning the cause of the Palestinian people for the establishment of an independent State of Palestine in accordance with various United Nations resolutions.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS ORGANIZATION

Mr. Robert W. Thabit, Representative at the United Nations

The International Progress Organization on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People acknowledges the progress realized in 1995 for an ultimate settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli problem. With the signing in Cairo on 27 August 1995 and in Washington on 28 September 1995, the legal framework for restoring the Palestinian people to their lands in Palestine in exchange for peace for Israel, is beginning to take shape. We commend the efforts of all who were involved, especially President Yasser Arafat and the late and noble Yitzhak Rabin, who led his Government both in war and peace toward an honourable and just settlement.

The parties should be guided by his boldness and vision of a just settlement with lasting peace between the two peoples to share the land of Palestine and build a joint future based on mutual respect and joint economies.

We call upon the Governments of the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France and all other peace-loving Governments to aid the Palestine National Authority economically so that there will be work for the now largely unemployed Palestinian people, to restore their hope in a better future, with peace and prosperity as the joint goals of the peoples of Palestine and Israel. There has been enough bloodshed between these two peoples who should now turn their minds and their efforts to improving the human condition of the Palestinian people.

The right of self-determination is very precious to the Palestinian people and includes their right to their own State of Palestine and their right to proclaim the "old city of Jerusalem" as the capital of Palestine.

Non-governmental organizations should also participate in the efforts to revitalize the Palestinian people and their efforts toward a peaceful and better future for all the peoples in Palestine.

NATIONAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WOMEN

[Original: Arabic]

Every year on 29 November, the international community observes the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and on this occasion the National Union of Tunisian Women has the pleasure to express, on behalf of all those who struggle for it, its full and unconditional support for and profound solidarity with every Palestinian individual struggling to achieve self-determination and the right to return, to freedom and liberation, and to sovereignty over his own land.

We should also like to offer this proud people our warmest congratulations on the momentous step it has taken on the road towards liberating its usurped territory and establishing an independent entity. This success has been achieved by enormous sacrifices made over half a century under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization and its Chairman, Yasser Arafat.

Palestinian women deserve special commendation for their prominent and pioneering role both during the period of struggle against the occupying forces and in the period of peace, the building of an independent Palestinian State and the campaign for development. We wish then ever-increasing success, and that they will achieve the progress to which they aspire in an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital.

May Palestine be free and independent, and may Palestinian women flourish and prosper.

ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN TRADE UNION UNITY

Mr. Michael P. Besha, Assistant Secretary-General

The Organization of African Trade Union Unity, on behalf of African workers, conveys solidarity greetings and best wishes for a peaceful observance of this day for Palestinian workers and people.

Long live international solidarity!

Long live peace!

THE WOMEN'S UNION OF RUSSIA

Ms. Galina Galkina, Co-chairperson

Today in our thoughts we are with those who gathered in New York for the solemn meeting to manifest their solidarity with the Palestinian people. We note with deep satisfaction that positive processes that started in the Middle East with an active assistance of the world's public opinion are strengthening this last period. It is an evident result of goodwill shown by all interested parties.

On this day we address to you an appeal to convey our solidarity to the Palestinian women and children who need our encouragement more than anybody, to say to them - we are with you, we take part in and support every action aiming at peace and prosperity of peoples in the Middle East region.

IV. CLOSING STATEMENTS

Mr. Farouk Kaddoumi, Head of the Political Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization

[Original: Arabic]

First, on behalf of the Palestine Liberation Organization, I should like to convey through you, Sir, our sincere thanks to all the sovereigns and heads of State who have sent messages of solidarity to this Committee. I also offer our heartfelt thanks for the messages of solidarity we have heard this morning from the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council of the United Nations, and from international organizations.

The United Nations commemoration of this Day and this gesture of solidarity reaffirm the Organization's commitment to the search for a just solution to this long-standing problem. The United Nations has always striven to establish a just and lasting peace in the Middle East region and to defuse the tension that still exists there. From the very outset, under the leadership of the PLO, the Palestinian people has worked to attain that goal and has made many sacrifices and concessions for the cause of peace.

In the future, the Palestinian people will not hesitate to defend the peace process, since we are on the right track. In keeping with the principles of the United States initiative of 1991 and of the Madrid peace Conference, the Palestinian people fervently desire a just and lasting peace. Our people as a whole has suffered for so long and sorely needs peace. We need the United Nations to help resolve this chronic problem.

In conclusion I wish to reiterate our heartfelt thanks for the Committee's contributions and support. Peace be with you.

Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

[Original: French]

The statements that we have heard and the messages of solidarity we have received today demonstrate once again the determination of the international community to progress towards the establishment of peace in the Middle East through the attainment of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with United Nations resolutions. I can assure you that we, the members of the Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, will spare no effort for the achievement of those objectives.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has made this meeting possible, in particular the members of the Division for Palestinian Rights, the Office of Conference Services, the Department of Public Information and the security officers and everyone else who works behind the scenes.

I want to remind everyone that the exhibit arranged by the office of the Permanent Observer of Palestine, under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, will be opened today at 6 p.m. in the public lobby of the General Assembly building, and that the ceremony will be followed by a reception to which you are all cordially invited.

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